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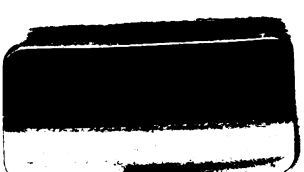

MAN'S BIRTHRIGHT

OR

THE HIGHER LAW OF PROPERTY

BY

EDWARD H. G. CLARK.

NEW YORK & LONDON
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
The Knickerbocker Press
1885

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1885

Press of
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
New York

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

The author of "Man's Birthright" claims to have arrived at a logical and well-founded solution of the vexed questions concerning the rightful ownership of the earth's surface and of property depending upon what Aristotle calls "Nature's bounty."

In associating their imprint with an essay dealing with such "burning questions," the publishers think it proper to say that they do not find themselves in accord with certain of the conclusions arrived at by the author. These conclusions appear to them, however, to be ably and forcibly presented, and to be entitled to respectful consideration, and it is their belief that the essay should be of service in inducing discussion in the right direction.

It is their opinion also that Mr. Clark's reasonings should prove of special service in offsetting the barren and pernicious theories of Henry George, in pointing out a method by

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which the "natural right" of each generation to some ownership in the surface of the earth can be respected without destroying the status of individual property upon which the existence and the development of civilized society depends, and finally in suggesting a logical and equitable basis for taxation to replace the various muddled and inequitable systems now in force.

It is in the hope that in these directions the book may lead to a wider and more intelligent discussion of the proper relations of the individual to society, that the publishers find themselves interested in placing it before the public.

DEDICATION.

IF, in this small volume, I have been able not only to present a great natural truth, a momentous human right, but to give it such decisive expression that it cannot be misunderstood, I shall attribute much of my success to the public and private influence of the most accomplished scholar I ever knew, the most superb orator I can even imagine, and the highest-minded, noblest man, I believe, that American institutions have thus far produced —my friend for twenty years, Wendell Phillips. During the last months of his life, when his home was full of illness, but when it was not supposed that death was drawing so near to his own great heart, I sent him the request, not knowing his afflictions, that he would read and consider the matter of this book, then in another form. Most earnestly and faithfully he did what I asked, writing several letters, moreover, of such commendation for my pen

that I have not the courage to commit them to print. But they have had much to do with this piece of work. I know the value of its basic thought—which is not my own. Of that, I ask no man's judgment. Mr. Phillips himself did not have time or health to weigh it fully; but he *took* time and strength to push me to the performance of the most mature and the most necessary task I have ever touched. And now, so much of it as I have finished I lay down devotedly to his memory. My bit of laurel may not be worthy of its shrine; but 't is the best I have.

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INTRODUCTION.

ABOUT four years ago, David Reeves Smith, the author of a book entitled "Ownership and Sovereignty," honored me with the request that I would use my experience, as a student of literature, to aid him in condensing his work and shaping it for publication.

At that time, I had given no special attention to the subject of political economy. In fact, I was prejudiced against what had been called "the dismal science," which seemed to me to have no head or centre, and to have arrived, withal, at a sort of practical atheism and logical inhumanity. Mr. Smith insisted that he had straightened out the whole tangle to which I objected—that he had analyzed it until he had made the one ultimate generalization, and found the one fundamental principle, underlying the entire realm of economics.

The claim was a large one. But I soon discovered in the claimant a power of analysis, a

capacity of construction, and a general scope of intellect such as few men have ever possessed. Let me note one example in a single direction.

I had given much of my own life to the unfashionable study of metaphysics—which is not the hopeless muddle that present materialism supposes, but which men like Sir William Hamilton and Dr. Mansel, not to say Auguste Comte, have left as a seeming abyss of contradictions and futilities, only by their own failure to grasp the thought of two Germans, Kant and Hegel. On this thin crust, as one man at least, Dr. Stirling, of Edinburgh, has shown, stands the whole cob-house of present "scientific skepticism," which is pretty nearly as superficial and unsatisfactory as political economy was before Henry George wrote his "Progress and Poverty," and David Reeves Smith wrote his "Ownership and Sovereignty."

But my point, just here, is this: "On becoming acquainted with Mr. Smith I found that, while he had made no study of the history of philosophy, and was very slightly informed in the technicalities of any philosophical system, he had, unaided and without effort, thought through the entire subject, from John Locke to Herbert Spencer. He knew, in substance all

even of philosophy that England, France, and America could teach, having picked it up wild by the way-side. Only the resolution of matter and motion, time and space, into the elemental entity which constitutes them—only Kant's "Deduction of the Categories," and Hegel's "Logic" had escaped this omnivorous thinker, though he had spent his years in constructing railroads and inventing machinery, with now and then some such diversion as tipping over the government of a South American dictator who happened to stand in the way of his business projects.

This man, too, had been familiar with the success of great undertakings, and equally familiar with the obstacles to all grand achievements. He had known what it is to be rich—the pet of millionaires and populace; and he had known what it is to be poor, and to sympathize with men, women, and little children who work too hard that others may not work at all, and who have too little to eat, to wear, and to keep them warm.

The author of "Ownership and Sovereignty" indeed, was a person of almost universal insight and experience. So, without a cordial liking for his subject, I was drawn to him and

his book, partly to see what such a man would make of such thing.

I consider that occasion one of the most fortunate of my life, so far, at least, as I have lived for the "pursuit of knowledge."

To edit "Ownership and Sovereignty" was necessarily to study it; and to study it thoroughly was to see that the author had really accomplished what he assumed. But his achievement was in the form of unrelieved statement and definition. His sentences were almost as concrete as cog-wheels, and his whole book was like a piece of machinery. Besides, it stood isolated. No connection with other systems was shown in it. No historical stairs were built, leading up to it. And he had arranged to publish only a limited edition, for special circulation. My friend's book will ultimately be read, perhaps, when mine will have shrunk into a commentary; but, for the general reader of the present day, it seemed necessary to take the one great inclusive principle of "Ownership and Sovereignty" and to re-dress, re-arrange, and elaborate it, from beginning to end. This I have done, in my own way.

Political economy, fully stated, is the science

of man's dependence on matter for his earthly existence. This dependence is his natural and inevitable condition—a condition fixed in the framework of the universe, and so is one of the corner-stones of that which is—the Absolute. But if man comes into the world dependent on matter—made so in the general work of God,—then he has a natural and inalienable right in that dependency. It is a right implied and given in his life itself—a natural birthright. In other words, if he has the right to live on earth at all, he has the right to share in that on which all earthly life depends—the bounty of nature, matter, property.

Without looking for help to any preceding investigations, Mr. Smith seems to have reached the principle of ownership by a direct, persistent analysis of the word, property. He went at it as Socrates took the words valor and justice, and generalized all specialties into a universal head. It is easy to follow him now—as easy as it was to follow Columbus with his egg, after he had once set it on end.

Here and there is property. But property of whom? And how came it such? Well, somebody's progenitors seized it, or it was obtained under certain customs and laws. But

seizure is not title. And whence the customs and laws? Customs and laws presuppose some reason, some ultimate principle, underlying and including them.

What, again, then, is property? Let us see. It is something held and used for the benefit of the holder. So the use of property, evidently, is the utilization of it for human benefit. But exactly wherein is the full, definite right of man to utilize any thing for his own benefit? Why, that right begins, of necessity, in his very relation to the planet on which he is placed. He *must* partake of it, or he himself is *not*. Natural ownership, therefore, is vested in this necessity, fundamental and common to mankind on earth; and all conventional or legal ownership is subject to natural ownership.

That no one ever reasoned thus until the last quarter of our nineteenth century, it would not be quite safe to say. But, prior to David Reeves Smith, I know of no mind, in all history, penetrating and rigid enough in the study of economics to have made the exhaustive statement I now quote:

"The unconscious elements of the universe exist solely and exclusively for the use and benefit of the

conscious. This natural, necessary, and indisputable relation—the natural right of the conscious to use or to utilize the unconscious—is the relation of ownership.

"The unconscious element of the universe is wealth, of which the conscious element is the owner. Wealth, having an owner, is property—the property of the owner. The unconscious, in whatever form or mode, all of it, each and every part of it, is the property of the conscious.

"The common ownership, by all the conscious, of all the unconscious, necessarily existing in the nature of things, is an indefeasible, inalienable, natural right, irrevocable and unchangeable while the conscious and the unconscious continue to coexist."

But, continues Mr. Smith:

"It being impossible for all common property to be used in common, distribution becomes necessary, and therefore right; and individuals, thereby acquiring the right to use and utilize the parts allotted to them, become the owners of such parts. Thus individual ownership is established, without in the least impairing or invalidating the pre-existing and co-existing common ownership. All things at any time owned by individuals, as private property, are, and necessarily must be, common property."

Mr. Smith's analysis of ownership having once been made, the world has no possible answer to it save brute force. The announcement of the law is the establishment of it. Its existence is a discovery, not an opinion. Like the law of gravitation, it is a fiat of the cosmos.

To have clearly and completely discovered the higher law of property may some day be accounted the most far-reaching feat of our present age. But more remarkable, to me, than even the analytic insight required for such a task, is the synthetic, constructive genius which enabled Mr. Smith to convert his great general law of absolute ethics into the practical results of mathematics, thus showing how to reach and realize, for every individual, the exact value of his birthright in the common estate. Still, in this direction, too, there was but one line to follow; for only one line had God laid out.

If he had created the earth as the common patrimony of mankind, then every generation of its inhabitants must own it. The general term of ownership, consequently, must be the average span of human life. Do statistics, in modern civilized countries, place this span at fifty years? If so, the territory of those coun-

tries should revert from one generation to another, every half-century.

But how make the value of this reversion constant, perpetual, and equal to all, yet disturb no individual right in distributed property?

Beyond all doubt, mistake, or inadequacy, Mr. Smith has answered this momentous question. I will summarize the answer, at the expense of some repetition later, as the rest of my introduction would not be clear without it.

If matter, property, the assets of the earth, revert to the common ownership of its people every fifty years, then one fiftieth of the general value reverts to them in one year. Hence, the annual right of all people in all property is just two per cent. of its value. Or, a yearly tax of two per cent. *ad valorem* on all assets is the precise collection due mankind, by virtue of their birthright in the common estate of material existence.

Mr. Smith has named this birth-right and death-rate tax "Natural Rent,"—the natural rent, under the higher law of property, due mankind yearly for the use of their estate, from individual sub-owners holding special distributions of it.

I see with certainty that the discovery and announcement here described is the great generalization, thought-form, or category, around which the social organisms of this world are destined, for a long future, to revolve, and to aggregate themselves. A hundred years from to-day, this statement will be comprehended and appreciated.

But I must now content myself, in these preliminary remarks, with the special illustration of one point, very important to the general mind, as confirmation of what I have said.

One demonstration that the higher law of property is the complete, the absolute foundation of economics, is this: it includes and justifies every previous finding of political science, so far as the finding is a fact, and renders unnecessary every scheme that is partial, unbalanced, and dangerous.

Let me take, at once, the latest and largest field of illustration in this province, although at the expense, once more, of some virtual repetition farther on, for which I do not apologize only because I do not see how to avoid it.

I suppose that what may be termed the "consensus of the competent," in Europe and America, has decided clearly enough that

Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" is the most searching and vigorous contribution to political economy that has been made during the present epoch.

But what is the gist of "Progress and Poverty"? It is the claim that land is, of right, common property; the historical proof that it was such under the laws of all ancient nations; and the scientific showing that, as the surface of the earth derives its chief value from the mere presence of population, no one man should be allowed to absorb from it the wealth which his neighbors mostly give to it.

Now, is there any possibility that the human intellect can overthrow these positions taken by Mr. George?

Never. His book is an impregnable fortress in that respect, and he has surrounded his theory with about all the knowledge pertaining to it there is in the world. He is so exhaustive in his facts as to break the very back of denial with the load of his luggage.

Still, Henry George, though unassailable in his data, and right in his theory as far as it goes, is entirely wrong in the outcome of his work, simply because his theory does not go far enough—is not the ultimate generalization

of the principle of ownership. Reasoning from a premise incomplete, his conclusion is narrow, partial, and destructive. When he would substantially confiscate land, by making it bear the whole burden of taxation, he would rob good faith and honest toil just as surely as if he should take a farmer's coat from his back, or the watch out of his pocket.

But the higher law of property, the moment it is understood, is seen to include and put in place all the beneficence and utility of Henry George, and to disperse every one of his errors and limitations.

Abstractly, indeed,—and I am obliged to say blindly,—Mr. George makes the same general claim for mankind in the natural right of ownership, that is made concretely, practically, and in full light, by the author of "Ownership and Sovereignty." For Mr. George holds that all men have an equal right to "land":—this is the whole premise and foundation of his work. And he explicitly defines "land" as "not merely the surface of the earth, but the whole material universe outside of man himself." But is not this the same thing as saying that matter is the natural estate of mind—that the conscious owns the unconscious? Cer-

tainly it is. And if Henry George had only stuck to his own largest definition of land (though a very bad one) I am not sure but he might have completed the science of political economy.

Still, the definition itself shows mental confusion, and is a usurpation in philology. For there had been an immeasurably better definition in existence, a perfect one in fact, for twenty-two hundred years, when Mr. George sat down to write. In its application to economics, as to many other subjects, Mr. George's "whole material universe outside of man" had been defined by Aristotle. He had called it "the bounty of nature." What an inexact cripple is the word, "land," when it is forced to convey the same meaning!

But having once defined "land" as synonymous with "the bounty of nature," Henry George throws away the definition for all further and practical purposes. When he comes to tax land, he means the actual acres of the earth's surface, just as every one else means. And this land he would tax to the verge of confiscation.

Here is his radical error, the fatal weakness in his logic. For even total confiscation and

re-distribution of "land," in the ordinary (and correct) sense, would not restore to mankind equal access to "the bounty of nature." This bounty of nature, in the forms of timber, stone, iron, and what not, has been taken out of land for thousands of years, and transmuted into every thing that man has wrought. Still it is the bounty of nature (and it is "land," in Henry George's larger sense), only it has been mixed with labor.

But why should not the land that has come out of land—the *transmuted* bounty of nature —be recovered to the people, as well as the raw material? Why stop at half the birthright? The halt leaves Mr. George in a most remarkable and indefensible position. As I have said elsewhere, "he would not tax a palace, but the plot under it. He would not tax a line of steamships, but their wharf. He would not tax a lump of gold, but the hole in the ground out of which it was dug."

And he gives what he considers a reason for this line of distinctions. It is this: Inasmuch as a man owns himself, he must own the product of his labor. If, at this point, Mr. George had said, not the *product* but the *value* of labor, he would have been again on the track to com-

plete the science of political economy. It is certainly true that a man owns the value of his work. So far as it comes wholly out of himself, who else can rightfully claim it? But the product of his work is a very different thing.

For every product arising from the hand of man is a combination. It is in part the bounty of nature (Henry George's "land"); in part, the result of labor. The bounty of nature is the objective base of every possible fabric; and this base, as Mr. George has spent years of thinking to prove, is *inalienable common property*. Hence, according to his own theory and demonstration, if logically followed out, all a man can possibly do in production is to place the stamp of his labor, as a seal of value, on some ground belonging to society. But, when Henry George finished his "Progress and Poverty," he was unable to see how the value of labor can be separated from the base of its product—one to be taxed, the other not. So he chose to ride one horn of a dilemma, instead of to break both horns by solving a problem. And on what a horn of what a dilemma he takes his ride! To prevent labor from being robbed by monopoly in raw land, this

benevolent reformer would permit labor to monopolize all the transmuted land of all the ages, and then to put the entire budget of its taxes on the other monopoly.

Happily such a course is unnecessary, impracticable, and impossible. The higher law of property instantly removes all the difficulty in which Henry George became involved.

The value of a man's labor cannot be directly separated from the base of the product it works up. Yet the man who improves any piece of the crude bounty of nature can turn it over to society by selling it, and receive from society, in purchasing any other product, an exact equivalent for his own labor, in the labor of some one else. This is the result of all true exchanges, and is really just what everybody wants.

So an adequate uniform tax on all wealth—a tax used or re-distributed for the common benefit—reaches the same end that would be reached (if the thing could be done at all in that way) by separating the value of labor in every piece of human handiwork from the bounty of nature composing its base, and then taxing the base alone as common property.

Right here, then, we return from the inadequacy of Mr. George to the full light of the higher law of ownership. Mankind, as a whole, own all the wealth of the earth they inhabit, natural or fabricated. But any individual may command and control, consume or bequeath any piece of that wealth, exactly in accordance with his true and just purchasing power—which means the precise value of his work, his skill, his ability. But he who wishes to sequester for himself any part of the general estate, whether it may have been improved by himself or another, must pay for the use of the people's share of value inseparably bound up in it. That share, as we have ascertained, is a rent or tax, fixed on the natural reversion of all the earth to its sovereign owner,—each generation of mankind, according to their average death-rate.

And now, on completing the introduction to this essay, I wish to impress upon the mind of the reader, with all the emphasis possible to human language, that what I have termed the principle of ownership, or the higher law of property, does not rest for its validity on any man's judgment, advocacy, or opposition. It is not a waif of theory. It is a fixture of the

Absolute, imbedded in the constitution of the universe. In other words, it is one of the structural relations between mind and matter, and so is just as actual as mind and matter themselves, or as time and space. But in the evolution of our world, this great fundamental law, like all other basic laws of the cosmos, has come clearly to human view only through a form of individual consciousness specially fitted to find it. The time for it has arrived, and it is here.

When Immanuel Kant had finished his "Critique of Pure Reason," which he should have named, also, the "Solution of Matter,"—the most profound piece of analysis ever achieved on earth,—he said of it: "The danger, in this case, is not that of being refuted, but of being misunderstood." In regard to the higher law of property, there is certainly no danger of being refuted, and I fancy there is not much danger of being misunderstood. The law is really too simple—is self-evident, in fact, as soon as it is once taken completely into comprehension. Besides, it is too much needed to settle a wild sea of stormy doubts and lowering questions that will soon engulf Europe and America in general revolution, unless justice

be done to the masses of men. In the last chapter of this bit of earnest and conservative writing, I have given the statement of present statistics, that half a dozen grasping individuals own or control one fiftieth of the assets of the United States, while the producing masses of American workmen support their families, as an average, on less than eighty-five cents a day. Let the great monopolies, which have engendered and legalized this state of things, give their screws a few more turns, and I would not insure American property at a premium of fifty cents on the dollar. Nor would I insure some American lives at ninety cents on the dollar.

But all the great occidental civilizations of our time are rushing toward a common crack of doom, like France before her first Revolution, while the rich and the poor, the priests and the politicians, are alike too ignorant and careless to see the cause or suggest the remedy.

In all history there has been but one nation born with the record, that has outlived it. I know not whether it was fifty or a hundred centuries ago, but some powerful ruler once lived in China, who possessed that phenomenon, so unusual, especially among rulers, a long and level head. He perceived that a gov-

ernment, to endure, must so build its institutions that all its subjects can have sufficient food, clothing, and shelter to sustain life, if nothing more. He perceived, also, that the bold, intelligent, and persistent spirits of a realm, must be afforded outlets for peaceful activity and honor, or else must be allowed to seize, for themselves, outlets of rebellion and destruction. So he organized the legislation of China to compass such ends. For the priest a place was made in the church. For every natural scholar a door was opened into some department of the "civil service." For an applicant of sufficient nerve and endurance, another door opened into the army. So, on, through the various grades of superior endowment. And then it was arranged that the naturally unintelligent and unambitious masses —the useful but non-assertive "Bantams" and "Shanghais" should be guaranteed a plenty of hard and constant work, for which they might always get a little rice and water, a clout and a mat, and a hut in which to sleep off their fatigue.

The wisdom of that ancient son of the sun, elaborated in weary detail throughout the laws and customs of an empire, has handed down

that empire, such as it is, from time immemorial to date.

But will the system of China do for the land of Thomas Jefferson and John Brown?

And what if Americans are approaching Chinese poverty, under a government of no system securing to them even a clout, a hut, and a mat, with a bit of rice and a drink of water?

To that end the facts point. Machinery has almost superseded labor. Private monopolies are rapidly fencing in the land and the water. Meanwhile, out of every old jumble of politics and economics some parrot is jabbering about the universal and resistless law of supply and demand.

Grim arguments, too, are rising on the other side. Now and then a few ounces of dynamite get mixed with them, and they explode. But, so far, they are mostly theoretical, and look to various reforms, some of which are certainly important, as far as they go. But no number of special poultices and plasters will ever cure the body politic. A general remedy to change the blood—to make over the whole system—must soon be taken, or the patient will rot with cancer, as Rome did, and will die.

One able and earnest man has become distinguished in our day, by the attempt to discover and prescribe such a great general remedy. That doctor of economics is Henry George. He is my personal friend. But his medicine, as I have shown, contains only in part the ingredients necessary to make it effectual. While it would cleanse and strengthen some of the social functions, it would deplete and poison others. Or, to drop metaphor, the common ownership of land—the confiscation of merely the raw bounty of nature in the interest of mankind—would injure some people quite as much as it would benefit others. Besides, it would be superficial, unnecessary, and morally wrong. It would be simply a vast monopoly of the manufacturer and the wage-worker against the farmer.

But the higher law of property, announced in this book, is subject to no such objection. It includes every inch of ground covered by Henry George. It is a deed of conveyance to the people of all the untransmuted land in the world; but it conveys to them, also, their exact natural right in all the transmuted land which they have erected on top of the other. It robs neither labor nor capital, but puts a

precisely equal burden on both. It is the "golden rule" carried into political economy. It is the democracy of Jefferson, waiving all "glittering generalities," and coming straight down to business.

Had I myself discovered this law, and devised the application of it, I should be as proud of my result as of any piece of finite work that I recall from any epoch.

I can make no claim to such an honor. I have merely perceived the greatness of another's work, and aided him in unfolding it. But I have taken the advice of Emerson, and hitched my "wagon to a star." The true, the universal, the absolute principle of ownership is at once the most portentous and blessed luminary that for many an age has crossed the earth's orbit.

CHAPTER I.

THE HIGHER LAW OF PROPERTY STATED AS SCIENCE AND ETHICS.

POLITICAL economy, in its latest results, has found the principle of property to be a very simple one—a law graven directly in the structure of the universe, and thus derived immediately from the Absolute ; or, if we prefer the language of religion, we may say commanded of God.

All nature—the cosmos—exists in some degree and variety of two forms: the conscious, including sentiency, and the unconscious, or what we ordinarily comprise in matter. But matter—the unknowing, the imperceptive, the unliving—has no object, no existence for itself: it exists for the living, the perceptive, the knowing, which alone has the functions to utilize it. So *matter is created in the relation of property: it is the estate and the birthright of the conscious.* Under this universal and fundamental law,—this constitution

of the Absolute,—man, standing at the head of consciousness and sentiency on his own planet, is the natural proprietor, the necessary administrator of the earth. He owns it while he lives on it. Being put upon it, he was sent to occupy it. His life consists in possessing it.

But, for the reason that the title of the conscious to the unconscious vests directly in the structure of the Absolute—the relation of all mind to all matter,—the possession is joint and common. No one man has the holding. The birthright of every human being is his equal share.

In this ultimate analysis of property, reaching what Kant would term a "category"—one of those complete generalizations beyond which there is nothing to say,—we can readily see why the question of ownership has never been seriously considered by any of the world's astute thinkers, from Aristotle to John Stuart Mill, without the cognition, more or less distinct, that what the author of "Economics" called "the bounty of nature," must necessarily be the general possession of each generation that comes to inhabit the earth. Practically, indeed, as well as logically, there is no other ground on which to stand. For, if man's

possession of the earth were not a common right, the occupation and monopoly of one man could, by simple exclusion, destroy another man's life; and the continuance of such exclusion and destruction would leave neither life nor title in anybody. And such has been the precise historical fact through all the "good old times" of rapine and murder, of which our present forms of government, with their legal codes, are the odds and ends.

But, in this indefeasible right of mankind to equality of access to the bounty of nature, no question arises concerning the equality of human beings in their individual composition. There is no occasion for some acrid, impatient Carlyle to draw the contrast between Judas Iscariot and Jesus Christ, and ask if one is to be held equal to the other. Who supposes that, when Thomas Jefferson sat down to draft the Declaration of American Independence, he would have admitted, for an instant, that George the Third was equal in understanding to Benjamin Franklin, or equal in kingliness of soul to George Washington? We may even assert, if we please, with the almost startling frankness of a recent writer, that "some men are undoubtedly inferior to

some dogs in nobility of character." As widely as men differ in character, quite as widely do they differ in ability. And with the power to do must always be joined the right to have. As, in the structure of the universe all mankind are equal in the title to a joint share of the world they are born to occupy, so, under the same conformation of the Absolute, no two men are equal in the capacity to occupy the world and utilize their birthright,—the capacity, that is, to acquire, save, and employ wealth. It is not to be doubted that some men are born to be rich, and some poor. Some are laborious, intelligent, and thrifty; others are lazy, improvident and reckless. These two classes cannot share alike, and no just or reasonable condition of society can ever enable them to share alike, in the wealth that the one creates and the other does not. They can only be afforded *equal opportunities at the start*, and thus each be made strictly and directly responsible for all further differences and consequences.

That no two persons in the world are exactly equal in special endowments is something that sanity, not to say common-sense, never doubts. Nevertheless, all persons in the world are precisely equal in the general relations of man to

his environment. All are equal in the necessity of birth and death; equal in their dependence on matter to sustain earthly life; equal in the right to live, each according to his individuality, without suppressing or destroying the individuality of others. But human beings cannot be equal even in the bare, natural right to live, without natural equality of access to the common means of all human existence.

By these presents, therefore,—the construction of the universe and the will of God,—be it known that mankind jointly hold the original, indefeasible title-deed to all the kingdoms of the world.

Thus it is the whole human race who constitute the owner, and the only sovereign-owner, of the globe; and it is the people of any country who constitute the owner, and the only sovereign-owner, of that country. The original landlord—the landlord by divine right—is mankind.

But now the question arises: What is the law which commands this sovereign himself—this landlord of all wealth—in utilizing his estate? But this means simply: How shall he dispose of his numerous and varied holdings to the best advantage? How shall he draw

from his wealth the largest income for himself —that is, for the common good?

Here is the question of the distribution of wealth according to the natural, the divine, and absolute law of its ownership. And the question has been answered.. The answer, moreover, is so simple, so clear, so just, that, when once announced, it establishes itself like a command of the decalogue or a demonstration of geometry.

To begin with, the people, as a whole, stand in precisely the same relation to their inheritance as that in which any owner of extensive and varied wealth stands to his property. They can make their estate profitable only by dividing it up and putting it in possession of those competent to handle it—that is, in the hands of those who want it and are able to pay the best price for the use of it. In other words, the whole question of the rightful distribution of a people's property resolves itself into one word, *rent*—"*natural rent.*"

But how can the vast common estate of the people—say the people of the United States—be put to rent in the interest of its real owner? And what is the proper rent to be collected?

This question is rather new, and no less

strange. Yet it is quite easy to translate our principle of philosophy, of religion, of ethics, into the results of mathematics.

The people own the earth—own it while they live on it,—each generation while they possess it. But the people die. Turning to the tables of statistics, we find that two in every hundred die yearly. Now, if such is the case, two per cent. of a country's wealth falls back annually into the common estate. If, at the death of every citizen who now passes away from the earth, his effects should be seized by their sovereign owner, it would take just fifty years for the reversion of present individual property to the general store. But this direct reversion is not the thing wanted; for the whole property would only have to be again distributed into individual hands, in order to make it yield its full value to any one.

If we consider the matter a moment, however, we perceive that the table of human mortality—the average death-rate—fixes the precise annual share of the people in all property. If the wealth of the earth reverts from one generation to another every fifty years, then one fiftieth, or just two per cent., reverts in one year. Thus the interest of the estate—

what must be termed the "natural rent" of it —is exactly two per cent. *ad valorem.* The share of the sovereign owner, therefore, may be simply levied and collected in the form of a tax.

The general principle here announced has come into the world to stay. It is one of those truths which, once discovered, taunts us with blindness that we have not always seen it. It is self-evident—that is, it has become a necessary birth in the evolution of reason and nature on this planet.

And in an epoch, not only of the omnipresent newspaper, but of the telegraph and telephone as well, how much has been done toward the next revolution in government, the next regeneration of society, when the fundamental law of the movement has been fully determined! Behold the law and consider. It necessitates an addition to our American Declaration of Independence. All men are "created equal":—they are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty" and PROPERTY.

It should be understood, however, that not in itself, not necessarily or even excusably, is there any danger, any strife or violence, in this

next inevitable step of social and governmental progress. It is no wild claim of one-eyed communism. It is no weak theory of well-meaning but impracticable socialism. For it takes strictly into account all the qualities, good and bad, of human nature. It does not expect to eradicate selfishness and greed, or to level organic differences and their unavoidable associations and sequences. It purposes only to employ these facts and factors of actual existence in such a way that they shall serve society, as a whole, quite as much as they now assist any individual member of it at the expense of the other members. The use of lightning was once supposed to be the shattering of trees and houses, and the flashing of wrath from the gods. We bottle it now and send it round the globe on errands.

Under the law of perfect justice,—the law of the Absolute, establishing the common ownership of all wealth by all mankind,—anybody and everybody may hold property, may buy and sell, own and bequeath it, precisely as they do under the present laws and customs of force, monopoly, and chicane. But the possessors will have to pay the natural rent of it; and, so long as this rent is paid, it will be of no

consequence who holds the property. It may descend from father to son, their "heirs and assigns forever." But it will be sure, in the end, to lapse into the hands of those most capable of sustaining and increasing it.

Then, at last, the nations will comprehend the true use of their Rothschilds, their Astors and Vanderbilts. The executive giants or the accretive maniacs may possess the land and the sea, if they can and wish. The more they do for themselves, the better for their sovereign-landlord, the whole people. Individual capacity and individual selfishness will be one with the public weal.

In the present epoch of political larceny, legal pillage, industrial contention, and general brutality in all the economic relations of life—a state of things plainly discerned and keenly felt by every alert spirit,—plans enough are proposed on all sides for a just and bearable distribution of the world's earnings. But these plans are mostly the circumscribed eruptions of special uneasiness, and have no foundation but opinion, or some temporary antagonism. The most specious and comprehensive of them, perhaps, is the proposition to impose a graduated tax on incomes; to the end that no

individual, under any circumstances, can accumulate property beyond a pre-arranged limit. Yet, where is the right, in nature or precedent, to take such a course or to fix such a limit? To tax a man's income is to put him under penalty for the superiority of his business talents and the active use of them. It is to discourage and dwarf the commendable faculty of accumulation. But, to tax his assets, is to push him to the utmost employment of that faculty, the benefits of which are shared by all society.

The world has no time for economic whims, guesses, and approximations. What is the definitive right of individual ownership, and what the definitive right of society, in the accumulated wealth of to-day? That is the question to be answered, before the moral sense or courage of mankind can be invoked to do any thing that will save modern civilization from impending wreck.

Well, individual ownership is entitled to just what it has got hold of, under the consent of nations and peoples groping in darkness, and knowing no better than to do and permit what has been done. There is no need of making any noise or trouble over the past. Let yester-

day go bury itself. But to-day we live under a new dispensation—the higher law of property. It is the eleventh commandment—without which the other ten will have small opportunity of fulfilment.

Thus saith the Lord :—

Thou shalt take for all my people, each year, two parts in every hundred of whatsoever value there be on the face of the earth. That portion did I make for my people in the beginning, and I have established it unto them forever for their common good. But whatsoever value remaineth, let that be with him who hath it. For him did I make and establish that portion.

And thou shalt do no man injury to his goods who cometh under this law. But for him who rejecteth it let there be no peace. He shall be an offence unto mine eyes, and a stumbling-block before the feet of them that keep my commandments.

CHAPTER II.

THE HIGHER LAW OF PROPERTY, AS ILLUSTRATED AND DEMONSTRATED BY THE FACTS OF HISTORY.

THE principle of property, then,—the higher law on which it rests,—is this :

First. The conscious in nature owns the unconscious. Matter is created as the necessary, natural, and inalienable possession of mind. Thus the inhabitants of the earth jointly own its material resources, and the people of any country are the sovereign owner of that country's wealth. But

Second. This wealth must be sub-possessed by individual owners—must be divided up and held according to ability and industry, in order to be fully utilized, which is the object and end of all matter, of all property.

Here are two opposite poles, two contending necessities, of the same thing. We have the principle in its integration, and in its disintegration. But we have

Third. The principle re-integrated in its

higher and complete form, which includes and co-ordinates its opposing factors. This co-ordination is effected in what has been explained as "Natural Rent." Thus Natural Rent is the solvent in which both the indefeasible rights of society, in regard to property, and the indefeasible rights of individuals, perfectly coalesce. The law is complete.

And here, for a moment, let us turn to history. The laws of the Absolute are always enacted in the facts of life, and the test of their genuineness is their actuality.

As remarkable as it may appear to the general ignorance and prejudice of to-day, the tenures of property, in every primitive nation unearthed by modern research, decree the common ownership of a country's natural wealth by the people possessing and defending it.

A familiar illustration, as frequently read as infrequently considered and comprehended, may be found in the Bible, relating to the polity of the Jews, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, in Mount Sinai, saying, * * * the land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine; for ye are

strangers and sojourners with me. * * * Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year. * * * A jubilee shall the fiftieth year be unto you. In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession. * * * If a man sell a dwelling-house in a walled city, within a full year may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established forever to him that bought it, throughout his generations; it shall not go out in the jubilee. But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country; they shall be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubilee."

Here we see that, among the ancient Israelites, the general redistribution of property took place every fifty years—the significant span of life allotted to each generation,—by the simple method of prohibiting the alienation of estates from the original families constituting the tribe. Among other primitive tribes and nations, the same result was reached by direct periodical redivision. All who stood as members of the community,—what we now designate as citizens—were thus placed, with each generation,

upon a substantial equality of wealth, or rather of natural opportunities to acquire it.

In those early days, of course, the property of a people consisted mainly of agricultural lands and of flocks and herds. So the redistribution of land was virtually the re-distribution of wealth in general. The exception, under the Mosaic laws, of habitations in walled cities, was of no consequence. To those walled cities the people retired rather for safety in case of war, and to protect such of their possessions as could be gathered behind fortifications, than for any regular purposes of accumulation or subsistence.

Of late much careful and critical research has been devoted to the habits, the laws, and customs of the earliest historic peoples. Sir Henry Maine, Tylor, Emile de Laveleye, Professor Nasse of Bonn, and other eminent scholars, have certainly covered sufficient ground to render their conclusions certain. In his "Primitive Property," M. de Laveleye asserts, as the result of his own world-wide investigations, that, "in all primitive societies, the soil was the joint property of the tribes, and was subject to periodical re-distribution among all the families, so that all might live by their labor as nature

has ordained. The comfort of each was thus proportioned to his energy and intelligence: no one at any rate was destitute of the means of subsistence; and inequality increasing from generation to generation was provided against." In reference to the Teutonic nations, the same exhaustive authority tells us that "freedom, and, as a consequence, the ownership of an undivided share of the common property, to which the head of every family in the clan was equally entitled, were in the German village essential rights."

In summing up this matter, still another well-known authority affirms that "wherever we can trace the early history of society, whether in Asia, in Africa, in America, or in Polynesia, land has been considered as common property, in which the rights of all who had admitted rights were equal." "This primitive adjustment," continues the historian, "still exists in more or less intact form, in the village communities of India, Russia, and the Sclavonic countries not yet, or not until recently, subjected to Turkish rule; in the mountain cantons of Switzerland; among the Kabyles in the north of Africa and the Kaffirs in the south; among the native population of Java and the aborigi-

nes of New Zealand ;—that is to say, wherever extraneous influences have left intact the primitive form of social organization."

Yes, at the sunrise of history, the evident and necessary principle, that men stand equal in the fundamental right of access to material nature, was clearly recognized and established. But, at the same time, we are not to forget that the sunrise of history was also the dawn of civilization—the first light of a new day rising from a night of chaotic savagery. Society was only organized in families and tribes, or, a little later, in nations growing out of families and tribes ; and no one nation recognized the right of another to any thing whatever that the stronger could take. Each regarded itself as the structure of a "sacred" or "chosen" people, under the special government and favor of heaven ; and all other nations as under the domination of false gods, or devils, the children and worshippers of which were proper food for war and spoil. So, while certain essential rights of man were perceived and asserted, every separate people denied them for all but themselves.

Then commenced, through battle and pillage, the assimilation of nations and races. The

powerful conquered the weaker, and extinguished or absorbed them; and the absorbed generally lost all rights whatever; they were merely granted the privilege to live, and to serve their foes as slaves. It is the same old story—India, Egypt, China; Chaldea, Persia, and Palestine; the Medes, the Syrians, the Phœnicians; Arabia, Tartary, and Thibet,—the same old story, with some variations of circumstance and enlightenment. The main divisions of Asia and the most prominent parts of the African sea-coast settled finally into something like acquaintance with each other, and respect for territorial limits. And, during lulls in war, trade arose. Then Rome lifted her head on the Seven Hills, and waved her sword until the whole known world bowed under her triumphal yoke.

Rome was the mother of human affiliation, as she was afterward the foster-mother of human brotherhood. Her birth was a rejection of tribal narrownesss and theological snobbery. Pelasgic, Sabine, Etruscan, she was the daughter of amalgamation. Her history is a grand reception, in which she introduced to each other, as her own subjects, all varieties of mankind. And Rome conquered the world

simply because she was the best friend the world had.

In her youth, she bore the hereditary marks of preceding barbarism. Her patricians and their clients—composed of the three original tribes—were a new and more generous form of the primeval patriarch and his kinsmen. But her plebeians—her conquered Latins—were incorporated as freemen, so far at least as they had been free when subjugated. She took in the various peoples as they were, only denying to them, at first, what she considered the high, sacred, yet dangerous powers of citizenship. But this limitation brought internal strife, through which, for five hundred years, she grew wise, strong, and trustful of human nature. Little by little, distinctions of birth and blood passed away, until at the first defeat of Carthage and the closing of the temple of Janus, thirty-five different nations were counted as Roman tribes, standing substantially equal with those of the original three.

And what of Rome in relation to property?

She started with nothing new, nor was it possible to start with any thing new. A walled town for a fortress and storehouse; a dwelling and a piece of ground for each citizen; the

common lands of the state—all that the state could conquer and hold;—this, we have seen, was the general condition of every primitive nation. Or, as Henry George puts it, "when the future mistress of the world first looms up, each citizen had his little homestead plot, which was inalienable; and the general domain —'the corn-land that was of public right'— was subject to common use, doubtless under regulations or customs which secured equality, as in the Teutonic mark and Swiss allmend."

The distinctive spirit of early Rome was patriotism. The ambition of her heroes was to achieve honor in the service of the state, and the greed of personal wealth was accounted beneath their dignity. When Cincinnatus was called to save his country, he was found at work on his little farm of less than three acres. Nearly two hundred years later, when the Samnites sent their embassy and their presents to Dentatus,—finding him cooking his own dinner, —what said the haughty soldier who had conquered every foe, and had thrice served as the head of his country? It was for him "not to possess riches, but to rule the rich"!

It was this spirit that became incorporate in the Licinian laws, which established limits to

the occupation of the public domain, stayed the growing encroachments of creditors upon debtors, and prevented the secession of half the population.

But how could a nation that was grasping the world avoid the shadow of her own career? What should her citizens feed on, when her purpose had been accomplished? As she became powerful and rich, the spirit of public aggrandizement, which had been the virtue of her leaders, turned inward upon her own vitals. As her generals and statesmen had carved up the world for their mother, so now they carved up the mother for themselves. The patricians and plebeians were no more; for they were one; but out of both combined had sprung the greedy and aristocratic optimates, who coveted both the whole wealth and the whole power of the republic, while their military commanders, as mercenary as themselves, sank to the selling of battles and the bribes of Jugurtha. The Licinian laws were overborne, and became practically obsolete. The great public "corn-lands" were sliced up, and drawn into private property. The rich landlords absorbed the small proprietors, driving them into the army, pushing them to the outskirts of civilization for new homes,

or permitting them to slide down into the rabble of proletarians and bondmen.

It was then that Tiberius Gracchus, looking through Etruria, and seeing the waste plains, the cattle and the slaves of a few monopolist proprietors, where once a population of contented farmers had held their hundreds of blooming fields and blushing vineyards,—it was then that the elder Gracchus saw that Rome must fall, or the lust of wealth among her leaders and rulers must be cut short.

But the "agrarian laws" of the Gracchi were no untried step in advance; they were only the revival of the early Roman constitution, as applied to property. Nearly two centuries and a half had passed since those Licinian rogations of Stolio and Sextius had presented the same agrarian principles, which, after a discussion of nine years, had been established as law. It was law violated, rights trampled out—it was the illegal encroachments of the rich upon the common property of all Roman citizens—which Tiberius Gracchus, advised by Scævola, the greatest lawyer of his age, attempted to remedy. His statute, limiting the holders of land to three hundred acres and compensating them for improvements, was merely a return

to the original custom under which the citizens of all nations had lived for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. And the subsequent plans of the younger Gracchus to relieve the poor by distributions of corn at the lowest possible rates was nothing but an assertion of their right to receive such restitution as the state could afford them for the robbery of their birthright to land, and so of the means to produce corn for themselves.

But "the mother of the Gracchi" lost her sons. The filthy wealth of Rome, without one scruple of manhood left, without one spark of true ambition, murdered the last of her citizens whom her gods had honored with a Roman conscience. Well might the vulgar Opimus pay for the head of the great young Caius its weight in gold; it was the last head in the republic that held the conception of any worth greater than material value.

The Gracchi dead, Rome lived on, and, in the culmination of her destiny, she produced even the vast executive brain of a Julius Cæsar. But Cæsar lived for Cæsar, not for Rome. The mistress of the world could no longer give birth to godlike men, but only to active and powerful human swine. The royal boar, Mark

Antony; his queenly sow, Cleopatra—these were now the the picture of those who led world.

It was "the great estates," said Pliny, that "sent Italy to perdition." When at last Rome counted her population at a hundred and twenty millions, the masses of her freemen, who had no other property to sell, sold their votes; and her legions of soldiers, who owned only their swords, sold what they had to the highest imperial bidder. And underneath the forty millions of such citizens and such soldiers there groped and grovelled eighty millions of slaves.

Thus, when Attila proclaimed himself the "scourge of God," and his Huns swarmed out of Pannonia to toss rotten, shameless Rome into the sloughs of chaos, he had exactly the right conception of the greatest need of his epoch. The sordid, disgraced, divided empire had become filled with a population like lice and fleas; the more of them that lived the worse for the world.

But the old annals are too familiar for repetition. The Hun, the Goth, the Vandal, the Frank—they were all unkempt and unrestrained barbarians; but in their veins was

new and hopeful blood. They were freemen. When they worked or fought, they worked or fought for themselves. Their kings were their leaders only because they were competent to lead. Every tribe was a democracy to the core, the Germans consulting even their women in all important matters, as Tacitus has left the record. They suffered no monopolies, no oppression. If freemen at all, they were equals in all natural opportunities, and only not equal, as so created, by reason of different abilities.

They trampled on Rome from end to end. They crushed her out; but they blended with her people. Born of this blending was the system of feudalism.

Feudalism was the settling-down of roving, conquering armies into permanent camps, each army holding its own ground as firmly as possible, but always quite ready to subdue and take in the camps of its neighbors. At the beginning of the eighth century the camp of Charlemagne had taken in nearly all the rest in Europe, and its chief was crowned "Emperor of the West."

As feudalism was the only system of society possible to the times, it was necessarily the best one. It was partial quiet and security

after complete uncertainty and destruction. It was rest, under terms imposed by soldiers, for the weary people who had long had no rest under any terms. Some one of those strong soldiers, called king, or prince, or duke, established himself in a country or province, and divided it up among his captains and lieutenants, they holding their counties or estates under tenures of military service to the donor, their chief.

Under such a system—early feudalism—titles to property were necessarily not fixed and permanent, but dependent on the ability of the holder to serve his lord and keep the peace of the people. The barbarian conquerors of Rome,—every tribe of them,—brought into the empire the original Asiatic, the original European and Roman idea, that the land of a country is the common property of its possessors. A king among them was their military and executive head for the maintenance of this right and all other rights. But when these same tribes moved out of their own lands and subjected other countries, this conception of common property in land assumed the form of graduated military regulation. They took the new country in the name of their king, as their

common heritage. But, to hold it over another people, it was necessary to portion it up according to the rank and power of those held responsible for its security. So the rights of a whole people became directly vested in the sovereignty of their chief leader—their "absolute monarch" by necessity, and thus their king by "divine right."

Remembering that in an army every right and every power centres in the general, and remembering also that for a thousand years Europe was nothing but an assemblage of armies attempting to become stationary,—remembering these two points, the chief features of feudalism became perfectly clear and intelligible. We perceive at once, why the most arrogant despots ruled the most pugnacious and incorrigible of freemen, with their hearty consent. We see why the common property, possessed by people who had always so claimed and held it, passed into the ownership of their sovereigns, and was thence distributed, under life tenures, to subordinate commanders made responsible for its safety and prosperity.

But the great thieves of Rome—those who had gradually stolen the common lands of the people and had finally murdered the Gracchi—

this class, having at last obtained their way, had sanctified their larcenies by forms of law, and converted the fruits of their unlawful greed into unquestioned hereditary possessions. They had even upset the early history of their country, and blackened the fame of her noblest, wisest sons, in order to confuse the moral sense of mankind. They had succeeded; and the world to-day has not opened its eyes to their frauds, or outgrown their false pretences.

Roman custom and Roman law doubtless had much influence in changing life tenures to property under early feudalism into hereditary titles. But the natural selfishness of mankind was enough in itself to accomplish the result. Given, a monopoly for a day, and no one ever ungripes it until it is wrung out of his hands. Yet it took a thousand years for the new conquerors of Europe to forget the laws and customs of their original homes. They hedged in hereditary ownership of land with wardship, control of female vassals, and countless oaths, forms, and establishments, enforcing public service in compensation for individual possession of what they knew to be the national and common estate. A duke, with the army of his duchy, must stand ever ready to defend

his sovereign at need. A count, with the force of his county, must sustain the duke; and the lower vassal must marshal the retainers of his estate to the support of his count. Their services to the nation were the pay for the nation's property which they held.

In the meantime, bodies of freemen combined, under something much like their ancient customs, for agricultural purposes, and other bands of freemen joined together and built up the great towns of commerce and manufacture.

The Christian church held enormous posessions and wielded vast influence—undoubtedly for good, and the greatest good then attainable. The little sect started by the devout, sweet-minded young Nazarine, Joshua, whom the Greek Jews called Jesus,—a sect of no account in Jerusalem, but which the fiery zealot, Paul, had saved by carrying it among the Gentiles,—this meek, humble, yet all-hopeful sect, which in the tumbling of Rome had preached and prayed for the "kingdom of heaven," had now clothed itself in the theology of Asia filtered through Greece; had taken the statues of Jupiter, Hercules, and Venus into its uses; had melted the hearts of both Roman emperors and barbarian kings; and its traditions had be-

come the religious and moral cement of the occidental world. Jesus himself would never have recognized the results of his work; but, in spite of all its husk and trash, the Christian religion had managed to preserve the central and only vital doctrine of its founder, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. In the midst of gory, dripping feudalism this church, which threatened eternal hell to men who feared nothing else, and which promised a peaceful heaven to poor souls whose earthly life was a chronic curse,—in such a state of society this church had none too much power, none too much influence. It was a part of every state,—the part which taught the inquiring, checked the powerful, cruel, and greedy, encouraged the rising poor, clothed the naked, and fed the hungry. It was based on national lands and property. Its benefices and revenues were held in trust for the common good; and the trust was fulfilled, if not perfectly, yet quite as well as could have been expected.

Our present civilization imagines it has outgrown feudalism, and that Cervantes laughed the last dying breath out of its body. It is a great mistake. The soul of it is extinct. The good of it has gone. But its worst features

overhang all Europe to-day like a nightmare, and its unburied hand writes the laws of America, in the most vital and practical relations between man and man.

It is true that, as Roman ambition brought the peoples of antiquity to each other's acquaintance under the flash of her subjugating sword, so the "golden rule" of Jesus, though wrapped in the second-hand clothes of all heathendom, gradually brought the putative followers of Christ to a sense of human equality in their common discipleship. The rise of this conception was the theoretical decline and end of slavery, which the invention of gunpowder, —the greatest single blessing that has been given to the modern world—made speedy and certain. Still, as *all* men rose to *free* men, society left behind the very basis of ancient freedom,—the foundation without which all freedom is a ghastly mockery, a grinning farce. The very existence, in fact, of this foundation had been overborne and forgotten. Sovereignty—the right to self—had once been inseparably united with ownership—the right to property. The feudal kings and barons kept the property, and the people took the sovereignty.

For instance, the piratical adventurers who conquered England under William the Norman, received the titles to their lands on consideration of putting sixty thousand horsemen into the field whenever required for the national service, together with numerous fines, dues, and services, the sum of which has been estimated as worth at least half the rental value of the kingdom. But when, with advanced methods of warfare, these "defenders of the soil," in the persons of their descendants, had been reduced to figure-heads and tassels, England abolished her military tenures, while her aristocracy kept the estates for which the costly services of her earls, counts, and knights had been the price. In other words, these cunning, betitled land-monopolists put just so much revenue into their own pockets, by saddling the military establishment of the realm upon the taxes borne by capital and labor. And this change, which has created the vast British war-debt—a sum which should have been paid out of the increasing rents of the land,—this glaring imposition upon industry, thrift, and poverty alike, has been celebrated by stupid John Bull, over his pipe of tobacco and mug of heavy beer (both taxed to help the imposition along),

as some wonderful step in the march of modern freedom!

In France, again, the Constituent Assembly of 1789 fancied that the heads of its members were bulging with wisdom, when that body lifted tithes from the lands which had supported the church, and bundled the expense upon general taxes. The Abbé Sieyès explained to them that the land-owners got their very titles in no other way than by paying these tithes, together with various public obligations, out of their rents. He explained, also, that the abolition of tithes was simply a gift to the rich, which must be paid by the poor, from their labor and their savings. But a nation about ready to dispense with God naturally looked with suspicion upon a priest, though the best of his order. The Abbé Sieyès was right; but haste, enthusiasm, and ignorance prevailed.

Once again. Notwithstanding the inundation of Europe by feudalism, the ancient customs of mankind asserted themselves to a considerable extent in all the various nations. As already mentioned, bodies of freemen formed communities, settled upon unoccupied lands, and tilled them in common—a system whence

sprung the word "commoner" (which Bacon used in its literal significance), and which has handed down to our Yankee Boston the name of its "Common." Of course it was necessary for these "commoners" to purchase the protection of some iron-cased baron, with his stone castle, and to be handsomely blackmailed by him and his retainers, for not being swept away. Still, we are told that "the commons, in feudal ages, embraced a very large proportion of the area of most European countries." Meanwhile, as conditions of peace and permanence were developed, the masses of the people—the peasantry—were hedged in with certain definite rights, like tenancy by custom instead of arbitrary will, and regular rents instead of unmitigated spoliation.

But precisely as the Roman optimates encroached upon the people's common lands, inclosing and taking them into enormous private estates, so the later European aristocrats, in spite of impotent royal edicts, and the still more impotent resistance of the people, gradually drew into their own possessions whatever else they coveted. And, as they despoiled the people of their commons, thus turning them into vagrants, they passed the most bloody

and brutal laws, branding and maiming the helpless victims of their robberies.

The systematic English enclosures of the commons began nearly four hundred years ago, under the miser-king, Henry the Seventh; and the great extent of them at that time is certain, if only from the fact that more than seven and a half millions of acres were inclosed, under legal enactments, even from 1710 to 1843.

What has been the result? Let me answer in the indignant, pathetic words of another:

"The English yeoman—the sturdy breed who won Crécy, and Poictiers, and Agincourt—are as extinct as the mastodon. The Scottish clansman, whose right to the soil of his native hills was once as undisputed as that of his chieftain, has been driven out to make room for the sheep-ranges or deer-parks of that chieftain's descendant; the tribal right of the Irishman has been turned into a tenancy-at-will. Thirty thousand men have legal power to expel the whole population from five-sixths of the British Islands, and the vast majority of the British people have no right whatever to their native land save to walk the streets or trudge the roads."

What a picture! Think of the unspeakable

injustice, the slow suffering, the long murder, the constant death behind it. And the sequel may be as sad and terrible!

And now let us glance at America. She is the mixed child of the Old World, and has simply inherited her conceptions of property, without thought and without knowledge. A few remnants of feudal law, like primogeniture, which she imported at the start, have become too ridiculous for use, and have been thrown away. But she has been so busy in asserting personal freedom alone,—the rights of man to the members of his body, the thoughts of his mind, and the dictates of his conscience,—that she has had little time to consider any other fundamental principles of human welfare. Nor has it long been necessary to do so.

The foundations of practical welfare on the earth—land and water for her people,—the means of their subsistance,—these she has had to spare, and to give away. Her chief need has been to find the heads and hands to utilize her vast resources. But of these heads and hands she is now getting full. Her best territory is occupied,—by fences if not by inhabitants; her people begin to crowd each other, though there is no need of it; and, from the

Atlantic to the Pacific, large classes are very poor, and are daily becoming poorer. Vast monopolies of all descriptions are concentrating wealth in the hands of the few, while the many are beginning to be considered fortunate if, by hard and constant work, they can earn a scanty living for their bodies, and for their minds and souls no living at all, or worse than none.

Illustration is here unnecessary, and time for it would be wasted. The facts are too glaring for question, as well as too cruel for silence. They utter themselves on every country road, in every street of every city, and in every alley between the streets. In a country new, fertile, inexhaustible; not settled to a tenth of its capacity; with endless invention and mechanism to aid in the gathering of wealth; it is only by close combination in trades-unions, and by bitter struggles in hundreds of ways, that the poor—millions of them—can provide themselves with indifferent food, shelter, and clothing.

It is evident, however, that the American people will never be the contented dupes and slaves of vulgar wealth,—of masters whose intelligence knows nothing better than a dollar, and how to make a show of it. As poverty in-

creases, the spirit of uneasiness, the spirit of resistance, increases with it. Intelligence asks why such wrong should be, and justice declares it shall not be always, nor even too long for wise endurance. It is becoming thoroughly understood that something is radically, totally wrong, in the whole structure of modern society. The combinations of labor, in addition to the direct purpose of maintaining or bettering their condition for the moment, are deeply, sometimes fiercely, studying the problem of superfluous wealth and excessive poverty. And they are on the very verge of all they seek to know. The whole philosophy of property,—the exact natural rights of man in relation to his material surroundings,—this philosophy has been announced, and these rights have been laid down. Gradually, yet not altogether slowly, they will be understood. And then they will be enforced. For, in this country, the people as a whole have the power—immediate, political, sovereign—to accomplish what their reason commends and their conscience commands.

CHAPTER III.

THE HISTORICAL GIST OF POLITICAL ECONOMY. THE END OF THE SCIENCE IN THE HIGHER LAW OF PROPERTY.

WE have now drawn the straight line of history, in connection with property, from the beginning of civilization to the present day. But, for the reason that the line is straight, it is short, precluding all details that could possibly be avoided. It presupposes, also, some little information on the part of the reader. Its use is this: it demonstrates practically, through the facts which have constituted human existence, the complete truth, the material actuality, of the principle of property,—that great direct law of the Absolute which was scientifically and ethically established in our first chapter.

The history of the world, so far, fully expresses and materializes that law in its phase of integration and its phase of disintegration, and shows that the phase of re-integration and

fulfilment is now in the first process of evolution.

The primeval ages, with their first natural perception of human rights and necessities, laid down the systems and the laws of common property. Those ages, too, were the epochs of right and duty,—the epochs of religion,—of the affirmative on earth, if only the affirmative of the earth's childhood. But the negative—disintegration, decay, evil, death,—these are the only means of growth. The negative is one half of every principle, one half of every fact, one half of every phenomenon. The reverse half of the principle of property came into distinct historic evolution with the individual separateness, the individual selfishness, and so the dearth of patriotism and the general decadence of Rome. It was further exemplified in the results of feudalism,—a system poisoned at the start, and finally rotted to the core from inoculation of Roman example and Roman law. And the epochs which have accomplished this work have been negative in all the rest,—the ages of greed and cunning, conscious and careless wrong, irreligion and littleness, in spite of their conceit, and in spite even of their great and beneficent contribu-

tions to the sum of human welfare. The time will soon come, in more respects than one, when our age too will be included among the "dark ages."

But in the phase of re-integration and fulfilment, now beginning its development in the principle of property, we see the affirmative and constructive, the moral and religious, coming back into the most ordinary and practical of human affairs. The question of individuality —of private rights, private judgment, private property,—this question of mere individual welfare, in all its forms, has been considered long enough. The question now is of all these rights, strictly maintained and *re*tained, but subordinated to the universal,—public rights, public judgment, public property, public welfare.

So an age of re-integration—of reconciling and co-ordinating the negative with the affirmative, the new with the old, the evil with the good—must necessarily be an age of reason and of conscience. Its first work, logically and inevitably, must be to prove the absolute truth on which it rests, and the absolute righteousness of that truth.

In regard to the principle of property, this

step has already been taken, this ground has already been covered. But here, to the same end, let us take a critical and historical glance at the general field of political economy.

Πολιτικός οἶκος-νόμος (universal, governmental house-law), is the logic of practical subsistence,—the explanation of man's relation to what he may eat and what he may own.

But there is no need of re-beginning the subject with Aristotle. The wise, synthetic Greek laid down the definition, and planted the science. But there could be no growth for it while the only real business of the world was war, and while industry was the service of slaves. What use for political economy had Rome when Cicero could be wise in his generation, and yet say: "The gains of merchants, of all who live by labor, are mean and ignoble. Merchandise is a badge of slavery." But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of our Christian era, when commerce had arisen and agriculture had become settled; when blessed gunpowder had been found, and was blowing the mere fighters of the earth to other hells than those of their own making; then inquiring minds began to ask for the causes and ends of work, trade, and money. In Italy, in

France, in Spain, in England, the same questions arose at almost the same time. In 1677 Andrew Yarranton seems to have grouped the elements and laid out the march of subsequent British industry; while a few years before, Louis the Fourteenth had called on the banker's clerk, Colbert, to save his realm from "the commercial distress in which two regencies and a weak reign" had involved the *fleur-de-lis*. Henceforward the subject of political economy in its various branches—agriculture, manufacture, trade, money,—became a part of the interest and discussion of the most observing and penetrating minds of Europe, whether John Locke, the elder Mirabeau, or David Hume, until, in the same year with the American Declaration of Independence, Adam Smith issued his "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations."

Treating production and the causes of improvement in it; the natural distribution of wealth; the functions of capital, labor, wages; the sources of public revenue, and the rightful methods of raising and employing it; the amiable and thoughtful Scotchman endeavored to group the different specialties of a vast theme into something like an exact science.

At that time, it must be observed, the hopes and the aspirations of mankind were becoming greatly exalted in many directions. Man as man,—his own master in all respects,—was asserting himself as never before. Machinery had largely taken the place of hands, and was swiftly multiplying its forces. Steam had been applied, and its new revelations to Watt gave promise of the wonders it has since achieved. It was the era, too, of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and the United States of America. Following speedily, came that tremendous moral and political earthquake, the French Revolution,—starved, depressed, debased humanity exploding at last from the depths, and breaking in pieces the whole hard, heavy crust of an unbearable social fabric. To hopeful and beneficent souls, it seemed indeed as if a new "golden age" was dawning, in which freedom, equality, peace, and plenty, would eventually become the lot of mankind.

But to this agreeable vision, what said the hard head of political economy?

Analyzing production, Adam Smith had laid down the formula that the capital of a nation, —the general fund invested in business,—is

the source of wages; and, as only so much can be divided up, the wages of workmen, hence, the industrial compensation of the masses, must depend upon their own number; being high if hands are few, low if hands are numerous.

This proposition seemed harmless enough; and, from the direct, superficial view, at least, was true. But in 1798 it was supplemented by the most ridiculous and essentially atheistic theory, perhaps, that has ever gained any considerable standing in modern thought,—the theory of the Reverend Mr. Malthus, that the plans and ways of God are so inharmonious and inconsequential that the populations of the earth naturally outrun the subsistence provided for them.

According to Malthus himself, in fact, the rule was announced that population doubles in twenty-five years, while, by no possibility can subsistence increase faster than as the addition of one to one in the same time. Thus, in a quarter of a century, a population of one million would become two millions; and, to this point subsistence might follow, adding its one to one, and feeding the new mouths. But, in another twenty-five years, population would

be four millions, and the support for them only three millions. The next step would be eight millions of people, with subsistence for four millions; and the next, sixteen millions, with food for not a third of them. According to this tendency, of course, the unchecked growth of the human race would presently need all the worlds in the solar universe to make a meal. But, as no more people can live than those who can find something to live on, what is the result? Nature, says Malthus, furnishes a check to population, in the inevitable fact of vice, poverty, and misery, which perpetually cut down human beings and rot them away.

This check is "positive": it takes care of itself. But, in addition to this positive check, may be applied the "preventive,"—abstinence from marriage, or certainly from procreation.

We will glance, in a moment, at the decline and fall of the Malthusian theory. Here, it is only necessary to say that, notwithstanding it had no legitimate data of any kind to sustain it, still it was specious enough, and soothing enough to the cowardly selfishness of British greed, just after the days of Marat and Robespierre, to gain wide-spread attention and eager

credence; and combined, as it was immediately with Adam Smith's "law of wages," it led to a most remarkable end.

If wages depend on the relation of capital to the number of laborers employed by it, and if laborers tend to increase faster than the earth can produce food and clothing for them, do not wages tend to decrease constantly in amount as they are more and more divided and distributed? And is it not Providence itself that uses poverty, vice and hunger, suffering and death, to fulfil its own requirements? But if so, why should the heart of man hope for a millennium of equality, comfort and beneficence? The world, it appears (in the eyes of the Reverend Mr. Malthus), was not made to realize such a soft, soft dream!

Then, to Malthus, was added David Ricardo, with his analysis of "rent." The cause of rent, says Ricardo, is the limitation of the earth, together with the difference of fertility and situation in its parts. Were land of equal fertility and value everywhere, and were enough to be had by everybody, there would be no such thing as rent. In a new country, where all may help themselves to land, it has no price: the best of it is occupied free. But, after

a while, the best is taken up, and then it becomes necessary to utilize poor locations. These poorer locations require more labor to make them equal in production, equal in value, to the best: so the best can now be rented,—the rent being the difference in yield or value between the best and the inferior. Finally all land is reserved, and becomes subject to rent,—which steadily increases with the increase of population, the landlord absorbing more and more profit, the people growing poorer and poorer, as more of them come into competition with each other for the opportunity to labor and to live. This the natural, the inevitable, the established "law of rent"!

Adam Smith, Thomas Robert Malthus, David Ricardo! But even these were not enough. From a new field, yet to the end of the same track, came Charles Darwin, with his doctrine of the "development of the species" and "the survival of the fittest," the fittest meaning the strongest:—this the law of all nature's realms, without exception,—the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, man!

Poor hard-headed political economy! Directly and indirectly, through such aids and authorities, it arrived substantially at this con-

clusion: that hunger, ignorance, squalor and wretchedness are the dower from heaven to the multitude of mankind, while the good and succulent things of the earth must needs go to the select, aristocratic few. Or the conclusion may be stated, picturesquely as well as strictly, in this way: the biggest hog has everywhere the moral right to eat all the swill in the trough, because his snout is the stiffest and ugliest. Considering himself born in the likeness of this favored snout, the Christian gentleman of the nineteenth century may grab wealth, build his palace of granite or marble, sit on the velvet of his pew in the most fashionable "house of God," and be justified in permitting the inferior selections of the human type to freeze or starve.

But is such stuff true? Not a bit of it; and every healthful mind knows it. Such "science," such "logic," is about as trustworthy as a vision inspired by the *delirium tremens*.

But the key to the puzzle, then,—where is it? The answer to all this formally correct, specious reasoning, which ends in abortion, with a chuckle from the devil himself,—how find, how state this answer?

It has been both found and stated; and this

time the honor belongs, not to Europe, but to America. A clear-headed, patient citizen of the United States has, within the last ten years, completely revolutionized the whole realm of political economy. I refer again to the author of "Progress and Poverty."

Starting anew at the beginning—that is, with Adam Smith,—Henry George, too, propounds the query: "Whence the source of man's wages for his work?" In most instances, as modern society is organized, capital is of course the fund from which wages are paid. But this, after all, is only the immediate, superficial source. How did capital itself come to exist, except as the earnings, the wages of labor, saved and accumulated? What is the source of wages in a new country, where yet the capitalist is not? Plainly enough, in such a case, the pay is directly in the work,—the game shot and bagged, the fish caught, the corn planted and reaped. Essentially, then, fundamentally, wages do not spring from capital; they spring from labor itself. To be got, they must earn themselves at every step. And this is just as much the fact when capital pays them, as when the laborer works for himself. In one instance he pays himself

his wages in his own productions; in the other instance he produces something by his day's labor with which he *could* pay himself, or be paid, but which he exchanges for his day's wages. The "law," therefore, that wages are drawn from capital, in the sense that they can be limited by any definite amount of capital, is seen to be not a law, after all, but only a mistake—a solemn farce. The amount of wages in the world can be limited, evidently, by nothing but the demand by all mankind for the productions of labor,—which is as good as infinite; and all that capital can do is either to facilitate or hamper human wants, and human endeavors to supply them.

So much for the great bugaboo of Dr. Adam Smith. Then Mr. George looks at the bugaboo of Malthus; looks at it until it dissolves and disappears.

'T is unnecessary to follow him, in detail, through the somewhat long line of this investigation, a good deal of which, indeed, had been traversed by others. Thirty years ago, for example, Mr. George K. Rickards, of London, in a series of lectures at Oxford, maintained as a strict deduction from facts, that precisely the reverse of the Malthusian doctrine is true,—

the support, the wealth of a nation, *tending to increase faster than its population.* This is the position which Mr. George has elaborated and confirmed, very easily and beyond all question.

But Malthus never had any real ground to stand on. His theory was never any thing more than a grotesquely exaggerated inference from observing that, in a new country, where population is needed more than any thing else, and where at the same time social life is narrowed to manual labor, eating, drinking, and propagating, human life may increase with rapidity, as it does among the lower classes in old countries, for the same reasons except one, the need of more people. In no country, on no piece of the earth ever touched for confirmation of the Malthusian theory, have the population been known to reach or approximate the capacity to maintain them. India fails as an illustration; China fails; and poor old Ireland, the favorite illustration,—why, when her people have been starving to death, her exports of food, the rent for English landlords, have always been far more than enough to preserve every Irish life. Moreover, while Malthus was expounding his fancy that a few families, under favorable conditions, would soon crowd the

globe, British peerages were constantly lapsing around him, because British families, under the most favorable conditions, were running entirely out.

And, as he had no facts in all history to support him, so, also, he had no analogies in nature. Even before the lectures of Mr. Rickards, Herbert Spencer had shown that, throughout all the realms of existence, reproduction decreases as individuation increases. The lower the form of life, as with vegetables, the greater the fecundity; the higher the animal life, as with man, the weaker the force of procreation, and the physical vigor required to maintain life. This demonstration takes man out of comparison with the vegetable and the lower animal kingdoms, while from just these fertile kingdoms he derives his own support;—a support, too, which can be multiplied indefinitely through his own knowledge and attention.

But why is it not clearly noticed, and frankly stated, that "the great Malthusian theory" was its own suicide, the moment it was propounded. Population, it says, outruns subsistence; hence the necessity,—the provision of nature,—for the "positive check" of poverty, misery, vice,

premature death. But there is a "preventive check,"—prudence in the relations of the sexes. These are the two horns of the dilemma. But the first horn is impaled on the second horn. For a little knowledge of physiology can at least render inoperative the seeds of human life, without decreasing or impairing any of its functions, and with no waste other than the universal prodigality of nature, which scatters abroad a hundred promises of fruit for one that arrives at germination and birth. It is the instinct of the yearning, loving, human heart, to bear and to find unmeasured comfort in children; yet, with advancing intelligence in men and women, it is quality of offspring, certainly, rather than excessive number, that is desired. And if, by any possibility, Malthus could have been right in regard to his "positive check," then Annie Besant, instructing the English poor in the "negative check," must be credited to-day with the best heart and the soundest common-sense in Britain. It would assuredly be better to forestall a superabundance of sons and daughters, than deliberately to raise them up that they might simply be driven into the dripping slaughter-house of monopoly, penury, crime, and destruction,—we ourselves abetting the universal homicide.

So neither Malthus nor Adam Smith, it appears, stands much in the way of a science of political economy, tolerable enough to be a science, also, of justice and mercy. As for Ricardo, we shall shortly find that, in the hands of Henry George, the celebrated expounder of the "law of rent" is merely pushed along one step in his own logic, which is then large enough for a benefaction to the entire human race. Darwin,—evolution,—the development of the species, with the survival of the fittest,—Mr. George does not need to deal with, except incidentally. The theory of evolution is in reality no plea for selfishness and brutality. For, even if man has come up little by little, as a birth through the lower animals,—if his great-grandfather was a monkey, whose great-grandfather was a fish-worm,—still, it is not yet denied that man is not only the highest but the most distinct of all animals,—has arrived at the possession, however he got it, of something which separates him completely from the fish-worm which he digs for bait, and the monkey that he uses to enhance the delights of the hand-organ. This something in man is the self-conscious mind,—the soul, the spirit;—a something which forever solemnly asks:

"What is wise, what is true, what is just, what is good?"—and which, having asked, insists that the wise and true, the just and good, be done! For this insistence he has spent his strength and blood through the many ages that we call tradition and history. "The development of the species," then, and the "survival of the fittest,"—what can that come to but a general type of man "strong" enough and "fit" enough to be decent and humane? Charles Darwin, that placid, ingenious, industrious observer of many things, may not have seen quite to the bottom of the universe; but there is nothing in his teaching to invert the "golden rule" or diabolize his fellow-creatures.

Having swept the path of political economy clear of the various litter which tripped up its votaries, Henry George begins his own distinctive work by the inquiry which names his book: Why it is that poverty remains among nations, while progress has found the appliances to produce more wealth than is needed for the comfortable support of every human being. It is not, as he proves, the necessary limitation of wages by capital. It is not that population out-eats subsistence. It is not from any requirement of science that the fittest man

must be the most carnivorous and cruel beast. It is not from any inharmony or inefficiency on the part of "Providence." But, if it comes from none of these causes, only one cause is left—the selfishness, or say the ignorance, the inaptitude, of man himself. Or, to use the sedate, technical language of Mr. George and the science of property, "the inquiry is narrowed to the laws of distribution."

"What, then, is the source of wealth? Whence does it come, and whither does it go? What factors enter into the production of it, and what proportions are returned to the several agents of this production?

To our first question there has never been but one answer. The primary source of all wealth, said Aristotle, is "the bounty of nature." This bounty of nature Henry George sums up as "land"; for without land mankind have no access to air, water, or any thing else. "The material universe," therefore, "outside of man himself," is the original base—the field and mine of all possible wealth.

The next source of wealth is labor. Man applies labor to land—to the bounty of nature,—and procures food, clothing, shelter. He strikes fire. He invents weapons and tools.

Then, after a while, he preserves some of his acquisitions to aid him in acquiring others. As soon as he reaches this point, a third factor enters into production—capital. The man has wealth in store; he is a capitalist.

Land, labor, capital. These three things underlie all wealth and all exchanges of it.

But the division of wealth in modern society? What is returned to these three sources of production? What goes to the possessors of land; what goes to labor; what to capital?

It is easy enough to separate and name these returns. For land, the return is rent. For capital, in the strict sense, wholly apart from land or labor, the return is interest. For labor, it is wages.

Now the wealth of the modern world, especially of Europe and America during the past hundred years, has increased enormously; not only in the aggregate, but in proportion to population. Have the wages, the returns of labor, increased? Hallam declares they are less now than they were in the middle ages,—a statement which Professor Rogers of Oxford has confirmed in ample detail. Has the rate of interest increased? Not at all; as a rule, it

has rather decreased. The third absorbent of wealth, then,—the possession of land,—must have taken all the vast profits of modern progress. Such is the fact. The rent of agricultural land in England is computed to be a hundred and twenty times as great, in money, as it was five hundred years ago; and fourteen times as great in wheat; while in the most thrifty parts of all Europe, the price of farms has doubled during the past thirty years. As for what rent has taken to itself under special opportunities, we have only to think, for an instant, of American cities like New York and Chicago.

With such startling facts before him, no wonder that Henry George sat down to make an exhaustive analysis of rent.

The question, here, was this: What enables the land-owners of the nations to harvest all their own immediate profits, and ultimately the profits of capital and labor besides?

We have already touched the "law of rent," as laid down by Ricardo, and as universally accepted, for one thing, by all competent political economy. Rent is the value of land, annual or in any given time, to personal ownership, and depends on "the margin of cultiva-

tion." That is, rent expresses the difference in value between one piece of "the bounty of nature," adapted to any given purpose, but monopolized, and some poorer piece of the bounty of nature, adapted with more work to the same purpose, but which can be occupied free. The saving of labor, as between the two, accrues to the owner of the first in the form of rent. As population increases, and individual occupancy of the bounty of nature extends, the least desirable portions of it are occupied, which, by increased labor, or enhanced mechanical appliances, are still made to yield a living to labor. But, by this time, perhaps, the value of the first reservations has become ten thousand per cent. more than that of the last. This ten thousand per cent. goes to the landlord, and labor remains on the level of a bare living, just where it began. Capital, too,—all capital separate from land-ownership,—stands just where it started; increased wealth, enhanced forces of production, give to it no higher rate of interest.

And now, suppose this individual occupancy and sequestration of the bounty of nature to go on, until all land, all matter on the earth, pass into the hands of a class of land-owners.

Capital and labor would evidently be at their absolute mercy, except that the selfishness of this one class would dictate that population should be just kept alive, and that capital should receive just enough interest to keep it in movement. But now, once more, let mechanical invention reach its goal,—let it substantially supersede labor,—then the land-owners would have no further use for capital or labor either, beyond just enough to keep up the supply of mechanism, with a few virtual slaves to handle it. They could legally murder the masses of all mankind, by a lock-out from every means of gaining a living. Doubtless there is no danger of such a result, in spite of our immediate and rapid tendency in that direction; yet it is the logical and inevitable sequence of the private ownership, the individual monopoly, of the bounty of nature, to which alone every human being must resort for subsistence.

Such is the end of the "law of rent." Yes, but it is the end of it in more aspects than one; for it is the destruction of it. It is not "the law of rent" that shall kill mankind, but mankind shall kill "the law of rent."

Let us look into the subject a little further.

What is implied, what is to be deduced, even from Ricardo?

According to his law of rent, what is it that really gives value to land?—to the bounty of nature which may at first be had for the taking? It is *population.* Men and women settle about or on the acres of some squatter, some Marquis of Westminster or an Astor family,—and the mere coming of these men and women, with their labor, their needs, and desires, makes the squatter rich. He may sit still and smoke his pipe; but their being there loads him with wealth! Thus they put the chief value into his possessions. And why should they not take it out again?

There is a very short road from "the law of rent" to the law of God!

At this point, however, it is time to ask if Henry George, the critic of all who preceded him in political economy, has himself covered the whole ground, or the whole ground even to date. The answer must be that he has not. He has swept utterly away all the rubbish, whether resulting from Adam Smith, Malthus, or Ricardo, which made the putative science a justification of inequality in human rights and of tyranny in human government. Henceforth,

in political economy, there is no room for the swine's snout, and no excuse for even the cunning fox's thievish nose.

Thus, the negative aim of "Progress and Poverty" is complete, while the literary entertainment is a rival of romance. And in his positive contribution to the march of thought, the march of events, there is no danger that Henry George will ever be refuted, ever undone. He has simply applied the necessity of nature, and so the decree of God, to the question of land. The land of the world belongs to the people of the world, and should be substantially reduced to common property, by taxing the rent out of it in behalf of society and government. Nor is this claim altogether new. John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, and other far-sighted, comprehensive minds, have recognized it. But Henry George has completed it, settled it. He has approached it from all points—present fact, ancient and modern history, science, ethics, religion. He has left nothing more to be said. To admit his proposition, with his demonstration of it, is merely to possess the capacity of understanding it, and the virtue not to lie. In short, he has precluded every criticism of his book save

one: that "Progress and Poverty," while perfectly true as far as it goes, stops short of the end. It is not the largest generalization possible to the subject, and demanded by the public weal.

Why?

To reclaim the lost right of the people to the common ownership of land,—to tax out of it the increment which legal larceny has turned over to individuals,—this, Henry George has proved to be just and necessary. But he would *make land bear all taxation whatever.* Here is the outcome of his work,—his whole practical remedy and result.

But now state this position, just so, to any man with a sound head, however free from selfishness or prejudice, and he will say at once: "The demand is not right and will not work." He may not be able to give the reason for his negative, but he will feel it and know it.

We will state the reason for him.

According to what may be called the abstract definition of "land" by Mr. George, that term includes, "not merely the surface of the earth as distinguished from the water and the air, but the whole material universe outside of man himself." But is it this abstract "land," in

whatever form it may be found—as raw material or as re-shaped by the hand of labor,—is it this whole bounty of nature, whether combined or uncombined with other factors, that he would restore to its common owners, by legal confiscation through the tax-collector? Certainly not. It is land, in the ordinary sense, which he means at this point: it is the speculator's reservations, the farm and the city-lot, the acres of the nations. Yet land has, so to speak, been taken out of land, ever since Adam and Eve, and has been transmuted into other forms of wealth. The rich bowels of the earth,—do they not glitter as diamonds and pass current as coins? Are they not piled up in the walls of castles and palaces, warehouses and dwellings, throughout the nations? Do they not span the rivers as bridges, and ride the oceans under pressure of sail and steam? And why should this transmuted land,—the timber and iron and stone of a thousand uses,—be untaxed, while the remaining untransmuted land should bear all taxes? The question is its own answer. The thing is not equitable, is not adequate, and hence is not practicable.

One of the largest hearts in the world, and one of the best heads, has Henry George; but

this Achilles, too, we find, has a very vulnerable spot in his heel. His weakness lies in the dictum that what "a man makes or produces is his own, as against all the world," with the inference that *no product of labor should be taxed.* Hence he would not tax a palace, but the plot under it. He would not tax a line of steamships, but their wharf. He would not tax a lump of gold, but the hole in the ground out of which it was dug. He would not tax the pen (better than gold), with which he wrote "Progress and Poverty." Distinguishing the common ownership of land from the private ownership of all other things, he says:

"The pen with which I am writing is justly mine. No other human being can rightfully lay claim to it. It has become mine because transferred to me by the stationer, to whom it was transferred by the importer, who obtained the exclusive right to it by transfer from the manufacturer, in whom, by the same process of purchase, vested the rights of those who dug the material from the ground and shaped it into a pen. Thus my exclusive right of ownership in the pen springs from the natural right of the individual to the use of his own faculties."

Now, in courtesy to Henry George, let us take his own golden pen to correct his mistake.

The material to make the pen, he says, was dug out of the ground. This material, then, was "land," and is still "land," only it has been turned into a new form. But all land is common property, in the sense that, whoever may hold it, the rent should be taxed out of it in behalf of all society. But, in that case, why should the land in Henry George's pen, if he wishes to shut it up for his own private use,—this land which is worth an infinitesimal something in the way of rent,—why should it be exempt from taxation, any more than other land? Furthermore, why should that part of the wealth in the pen resulting from labor be exempt from taxation? Mr. George has demonstrated that land derives its value from population,—some value from the first settler who has use for the bounty of nature, and increasing value from other settlers on it and around it. But is not labor largely subject to the same law? Is it not the presence of the people, with their needs and desires, that creates the chief value of every thing else, as well as of land? How much value would attach to labor itself—all the labor of modern civilization,—were it not for men and women

—all society—to utilize its products? Again, Mr. George has himself shown, abundantly and conclusively, that the quantity and quality of production, and so the value of labor, is dependent on population. In his disproof of the Malthusian theory—that part of it which asserts decreasing proportional subsistence to increasing proportional population,—he says:

"Even if the increase of population does reduce the power of the natural factor of wealth, by compelling resort to poorer soils, it yet so vastly increases the power of the human factor as to more than compensate. Twenty men working together will, where nature is niggardly, produce more than twenty times the wealth that one man can produce where nature is most bountiful. The denser the population the more minute becomes the subdivision of labor, and hence the very reverse of the Malthusian doctrine is true; and, within the limits which we have reason to suppose increase would still go on, in any given state of civilization a greater number of people can produce a larger proportional amount of wealth and more fully supply their wants, than can a smaller number."

So, in reality, according to Henry George, the products of a man's labor are not altogether dependent on himself, but are aided and in-

creased by the labor of others. There is, strictly, a joint interest in them,—his own and that of society,—in spite of all he can do.

And let us ask one more question. If "land," being the whole bounty of nature, is the common property of mankind, is not the joint ownership inalienable? Is not the title vested in the whole human race, from beginning to end? Whether land, therefore, is left in the earth, or is taken out of the earth and turned into the varied forms of wealth by labor, how can the common ownership of it be forfeited?

There is doubt, it appears, after all, that the part of Henry George's pen which is "land" belongs without reserve to himself; and there is doubt, no less, that the part of the pen which is labor belongs to him without proviso. The truth is that Henry George's defect is here radical. It impairs even his definitions. It leads him, for instance, to exclude the whole bounty of nature from the term "wealth," for he says distinctly that "nothing which nature supplies to man without his labor is wealth," but that "wealth, as alone the term can be used in political economy, consists of natural products that have been secured, moved,

combined, separated, or in other ways modified by human exertion." Yet, if this definition is correct, what does the whole world mean by the term "natural wealth," to designate just what Henry George says is not wealth at all? Have we no right to use it? Or has one gentleman usurped a right in philology which does not belong to him? Surely we need not be too finical about the terminology of political economy. It is only the question of the dinner-pot generalized; and, if we say what we mean, in the most customary and intelligible way, we shall sufficiently maintain both the precision and the dignity of our theme.

But why play with the minor points of this issue? Let us admit—for it is self-evident—the whole of Henry George's claim, that, inasmuch as a man belongs to himself—is the owner of his faculties,—the work done by these faculties must belong to him also. But what has this self-evident truth to do with the inference that nothing but crude, untransmuted land should be taxed? That a man may exercise in production the faculties which belong to him, he must have some piece of the bounty of nature—some piece of what Henry George

calls "land"—to exercise those faculties *on;* and so every product arising from the use of his faculties is a combination of land and labor. Land—the bounty of nature—is the objective base of every possible fabric; and this base, as Mr. George has written his entire book to prove, is inalienable common property. Hence, all that any individual man can do, in production, is to place the stamp of his labor, as a seal of value, upon something as a ground which belongs to society. If the value of his labor—his stamp and seal—could in any way be separated from the rest of the article he produces, and from the relations of all other labor to it, then, certainly, the individual producer would absolutely own such value, and society would have no interest in it, and no right to tax it. But no such separation can be made. Human arithmetic has no way to reach it. All individual ownership, therefore, is subject to a higher title—common ownership. The stamp of man's labor goes over to God's bounty, follows it, and merges in it.

Yet there is no trouble, not the least practical importance, attached to this law, in connection with individual rights or individual interests. For the man who puts his seal of

value upon any piece of the bounty of nature can sell it, and buy something else:—he can exchange it, that is, for any other commodity he wants; and in that commodity the value of his own labor, if the exchange is a just one, is perfectly equalized by the value of some other person's labor.

The true law of ownership, then, is this: Mankind, as a whole, own the entire wealth of the world, natural and fabricated; but every individual in the world can command and control any piece of that wealth *according to his normal purchasing-power*—which is the *exact index of the value of his labor, his skill, his pecuniary ability.* But if he wishes to set aside, for his private uses, any portion of the general wealth, whether the piece of property contains his own labor or that of some one else, then he must pay, on that piece of property, the rent of the people's share of value bound up in it; and, if every other member of society pays his proportionate share of such value, exact justice is reached in every respect.

And now we come to our last step: we have only to ascertain what the people's share is, at any and every point of time, in the aggregate wealth of the world. The first chapter of our little essay shows that share to be an *ad-valorem*

tax on the property of every generation, exactly proportioned to the death-rate of the population.

So it will not do, we perceive, to follow Henry George in the practical application of his doctrine, confiscating land. Besides being unjust and impolitic, that doctrine leads only to one province of the millennium. Mankind will long honor the guide who fully discovered that province; but *we must occupy the whole realm.* To confiscate the rent of crude, untransmuted land, by taxation in the interest of the people, while permitting transmuted land to go untaxed,—*this is only just half enough.* It is the rent of all wealth whatever that belongs to "the common estate"; and no part of this rent is to be confiscated from some individuals, but the whole of it is to be rigidly collected of all individuals.

Mr. George, therefore, must certainly pay a tax, even on his pen,—a tax which he will doubtless pay most cheerfully, as soon as he perceives that he ought. For Adam Smith was right, after all,—and in a much larger significance than he imagined,—when he laid down his old dictum, that "the subjects of every state ought to contribute toward the support of the government as nearly as possible in proportion to their respective abilities."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HIGHER LAW OF PROPERTY IN ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION. A GLANCE AT THE MEANS NECESSARY TO THE END.

THERE ought now, certainly, to be no further need of elucidation to establish in every alert understanding the great principle, or law, of property. We have found, to begin with, that this principle constitutes one of the fundamental relations between mind and matter; and thus we have simply formulated one of the absolute laws of the universe, and uttered one of the everlasting commandments of God. Next, we have traversed human history, and have found that the existence of mankind on the earth has been a living verification, a practical embodiment of this principle, this law, this commandment. Finally, we have retraced the line of that special science through which the principle of property has been gradually developed and mirrored to man's reason; and here we have found that every step in political

economy, from Aristotle to Henry George, leads inevitably to our own last step, which is the logical end of the science itself. In specially scrutinizing Mr. George we have ascertained where lies the flaw which everybody feels there is in his doctrine, when he would impose the taxes of all society upon one class of society—the owners of land. Yet, while pointing out this flaw, we have the more fully confirmed the substantial truth of Mr. George's position, showing that his only weakness is in being, not incorrect, but incomplete. The moment his *own logic*, according to his *own language*, is literally carried out, his half-generalization turns into a whole one,—his hemisphere becomes a rounded globe. In itself, therefore, the principle of property need be no further discussed. We must consider it settled. Let us turn now to the practical application of it,—the means and the results of putting it into operation.

The people of the world own the world, as their joint possession, by natural and divine right. The citizens of a country own the material wealth of that country, under the same title. They are the sovereign landlord of such bounty of nature as it affords, works up, or ex-

changes. As this landlord, rent accrues to them,—the natural rent of their common estate; and this rent, based on the average mortality of citizens, falls into the form of an annual *ad-valorem* tax on assets,—the only form in which it can be practically realized.

But how is such a tax to be collected? And what is to be done with it?

Well, by the time the subject becomes sufficiently understood to command practice, the collection of the people's rent will be easy enough. In the United States it can be collected substantially as the income-tax was collected during the War of the Rebellion, with as much cheaper and better methods as can be devised by a nation instead of a party, and in the calm of peace instead of the tumult of war. There need be no difficulty, at least, in making the levy full and effective. If, in preparing a schedule of assets for taxation, any citizen sets the value of a piece of property too low, its superior owner, the people, may take it themselves, at his own estimate, and pay him for it. Under such a rule, the most unpatriotic tax-dodger would soon be washed and combed into a being presentable to the rest of the community.

But the disposition to be made of the tax? What are the people to do with so much wealth?

This is the paramount question that every darling little aristocrat will most anxiously put to his startled understanding.

The reply shall be frank and exact, though it will not be necessary to go into minute details.

One thing must never be out of mind in connection with this whole subject—that is, the common, the undivided, the public ownership of the property taxed, and hence the common, the undivided, the public ownership of the tax itself. There can be no direct redistribution of this tax to individuals, that laggards and bummers may swallow their portion of it. Their portion is joint and inseparable from the rest. This point is involved in the absolute law of property itself, and so it would have to be a part of what is termed "the constitution," under any government fulfilling that law.

The first use for the annual rent of the people's estate will necessarily be to pay for managing the heritage. All expenses of government will constitute this item. Then the

residue will be employed in what may be summed up as internal improvements, that term being understood in the largest sense. There are some things which equally conduce to the welfare of all the people of any nation. These things are fresh air, pure water, comfortable habitations, cheap, wholesome food and clothing, facilities of travel and communication, and the fundamental means of education and progress. There is no need of dogmatizing, here, on any man's special manner of distributing these general blessings. Methods would rest on the experience of nations, so far as they have gone, and on the good sense of mankind in general. Besides, they would have to be submitted to the popular will—the people's vote. For the principle of property presupposes the sovereignty of the people. If the people own a country, they direct the management of it;—and just that management is the whole meaning of government.

Still, if we wish some specific suggestions concerning the outlay of a people's natural rent, beyond the immediate expenses of government,—say in the United States,—such suggestions can easily be given.

For one thing, the people should own all

the land, buildings, and appliances required to conduct their government. The government should not hire these things of private individuals, unless in exceptional instances, but should buy, and build, and hold them as the agent of the common owner. A people should be their own capitalist, and should save rent and interest. And what would this simple application of ordinary business sense, in one direction, immediately achieve? It would help the poor, while economizing for rich and poor alike. It would provide work for capitalists, mechanics, laborers, and clerks, at a fair price. To no inconsiderable extent, the people, the masses, could thus, through their government, enter into competition with other capitalists in the employment of labor, and lessen their dependence on individual employers. This one step alone would have almost adequately relieved the people of the United States during any recent pressure of "hard times."

Yet this would be only the first toddling step of infancy. No country road and no city street or by-way of a nation, when mankind once know their rights, will ever be left in improper or unhealthful conditions. No dwelling will

be allowed to stand that is not fit for the habitation of a decent human being. The poor man's hovel will not first poison and kill his babes, and then waft contamination and death to the rich man's drawing-room and nursery: both hearts will be spared in their tenderest spot by a little justice applied to wealth. Then, if the rich delight in their private gardens, the people can have public parks,—not some stinted suggestions of grass, and flowers, and trees, but royal enclosures, glorious enough for their new king, and for nature and reality. Public baths, too, might be as numerous, accessible and remedial as they were in old Rome;—not altogether free, perhaps, but near enough to it to be only self-supporting. As for rivers, canals, railways—all avenues of travel and transportation,—these would of course be improved and amplified to their fullest scope; then they would be appropriated or regulated to the economy of the people.

It is evident there will always be enough public uses to which a people may put the natural rent that belongs to them. They may use it, if they wish, in competition with individual landlords; and this would be the just and proper way to recover the undue gains which

have followed the private ownership of land, instead of taxing such ownership out of existence. For example, the people could build and lease dwellings adapted to the needs of the majority of citizens; or they could simply give government premiums to private enterprise for doing the same thing, thus making ordinary habitations plentiful and cheap. This simple method of competition between the great public landlord and the several private landlords would gradually reduce all rent to a normal basis, without the injustice of taking away any kind of property from people who have come into lawful possession of it.

In fact, having found the correct, the absolute principle of property, there is no department of government, of business, or of right, that it does not fit.

However, it must now be stated and borne thoroughly in mind, that the higher law of property, like every other basic principle of the universe, is dependent, for its practical fulfilment, on certain fundamental adjustments of economics and politics, as means to the end.

An annual *ad-valorem* tax on the world's assets, adjusted in acordance with the average death-rate of mankind, and re-distributed in

common public benefits, would constantly render every inhabitant of the globe equal to every other inhabitant in the natural and inalienable right of access to matter. But this right can only be reached, or at least maintained, through a universal and actual system of democracy, as the world's government. For no king, no aristocrat, no monopolist of any kind, ever ungriped for a people what belonged to them. They must take it if they are to have it. On the other hand, they can never keep it, if they take it, until they are intelligent and just enough for genuine self-government.

So far, there has been no actual, complete democracy among the governments of the earth. In the United States we doubtless have the nearest approximation to it that our planet has ever furnished on a large scale. But our country has always, in reality, been governed by oligarchies. From 1789 to 1861, the slave-holding oligarchs of the South, and the banking and trading oligarchs of the North, joined hands, with perfect success, through national and state legislation, to monopolize the fruits of our industry and growth. And they tried hard enough to overturn the very

principles, if not the forms, of popular government. Since the War of the Rebellion a new set of oligarchies have arisen, with a broader field of action, and with almost greater dangers to the people than were threatened by the old ones.

Take the money oligarchy as the first instance,—the "respectable" and cunning monopoly which has directly and indirectly controlled the currency of the country during the past quarter of a century. This combination began its career, in 1861, by influencing the Senate to destroy those features of the legal-tender act by which the House had placed the national credit at par with coin. By this crime, or "blunder worse than crime," the national treasury was forced to dump its paper into the world's "bullion-shops" at from forty to seventy-five cents on the dollar. Mr. Spaulding, "father of the greenback," and since President of the National Banking Association, protested bitterly against the whole scheme of "knocking down the government stocks," which he proclaimed, in advance, would "double the national debt"; and the "grand old commoner," Thaddeus Stevens, declared that the Senate had been induced, "with but little

deliberation," to "mangle and destroy what it had cost the House months to digest, consider, and pass." The prophecy of Mr. Spaulding and the fears of Mr. Stevens were soon terribly justified. At the close of the war the national debt, which should have been some eighteen hundred millions of dollars, had reached twenty-eight hundred and eight millions. The volume of currency, which should have been about a thousand millions, had been inflated to more than eighteen hundred millions; and then a system of contraction was precipitated, by means of which the bubble collapsed, and which might have ended in popular turmoil had not Congress intervened. Through our system of currency since the opening of the Rebellion, the sum of wealth (principal and interest) taken from the people as a whole, and absorbed by the few, has been variously estimated at from five to seven billions of dollars. At the most conservative figure, it can hardly be placed at less than one tenth of the country's present wealth.

But, if such an abomination be possible—and it is nothing now but one of the cold facts of history,—it is evident that no distribution of wealth, however just and adequate, can be

made effective without a system also of just money. Money, in fact, strictly speaking, is the divisible and aggregate representative of all wealth,—the medium alone through which property can be exchanged,—and so the abuse and derangement of that which represents and commands all property necessarily deranges all property itself.

Scientific money—a money of invariable value, and which can never be cornered—a money fitting every commodity, and commanding it as definitely as any deed commands any house and lot,—such money is not a dream, but an easy possibility of the future. Men will be infants and barbarians until they achieve it.

In a second volume of this book I hope to epitomize the history of money, and to show what scientific money is, in system and detail.

I hope at the same time to expound, by sufficient analysis and illustration, a scientific or rational tariff. For, next to a true and adequate system of currency, such a tariff is an indispensable means of securing and maintaining, for any people, their rights in property.

The tariff system of the United States, nota-

bly during the past quarter of a century, has been one of so-called "protection to American industry."

But what have been the fruits by which we know it?

One glance at statistics will give the answer.

We have fifty millions of people in this country, and fifty billions of dollars in property—enough to count one thousand dollars to every man, woman, and child, or five thousand dollars to a family.

But how is the property situated? Vanderbilt is said to have two hundred millions of it. Jay Gould has gathered up—never mind how much, but all he could safely get. Three or four other men, in New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, stand together for about as much as Vanderbilt and Gould. In other words, half a dozen men in the United States own or control one fiftieth of the whole nation's assets.

Again, if we are to trust the United States census of 1880, the number of work-people engaged in American manufactures was two million seven hundred and thirty-seven thousand, and they averaged three hundred and forty-six dollars each—less than a dollar a day. But, on

every dollar of that labor, capital made a dollar and eight cents; and it averaged thirty-six per cent. on its aggregate investment. In the same year we had eight millions of farmers and farm-hands. They got for their toil the average of two hundred and eighty-nine dollars. Here, then, were the American producers—the great mass of them, with their families,—their average living, taken all together, being about eighty-five cents a day, a sum which has certainly been much decreased by the subsequent pressure of "hard times."

Our American "protective tariff" is evidently a good thing—for oligarchies, for monopolies.

But the tariff alone is far from being guilty of all the sins condensed in these figures. The railway oligarchs, for instance, have shovelled in their "swag," as some of them frankly call it, not by means of the tariff, but mostly by obtaining the right from the people to convey their productions to market, and then turning round on the farmer and manufacturer and charging for the freight on such productions all that they can be made to yield without absolutely stopping their shipment.

That is our American railroad system. It

does not earn what it gets. It simply corners production and takes all that can be grabbed—all that "the traffic will bear." That is why the grain of the West cannot come to the East, and the manufactures of the East cannot go to the West, at prices under which they can be freely exchanged and keep us all busy.

But, in addition to such booty, these same great railway bandits have given away to themselves, through their clerks and servants in Congress, more than two hundred million acres of the public lands. Horace Greeley used to say: "Young man, go West." Now, there is no West for the young man to take, after he goes there. The homestead that belongs to him the railroads have pocketed; for, after all they have not literally stolen it.

Once again, our whole system of American taxation has come to be so arranged that it spares the rich and burdens the poor. It constantly tends to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer. Every farmer must pinch a dollar, to pay the taxes on his bit of ground. Every city mechanic, trader, or laborer, must do the same to preserve his modest homestead. But a bondholder, with millions of personal property, can shuffle off the taxes on eight

tenths of his estate. The fact is, the rich have made all our laws, especially for the last twenty-three years; and they have made those laws wholly for themselves.

So, to see where the people's natural wealth and the productions of their labor have been absorbed,—to see why the masses are living on less than eighty-five cents a day for a family, and thus verging on a condition that has appropriately enough been called "white slavery,"—it is necessary to look mainly in five directions. There is the great currency-fraud; there is the tariff; and then come the vast railway monopolies, the land-grabs, and the cruel and abominable discriminations of the tax-levies.

On a moment's consideration, it will be perceived that the "land-question" and the "tax-question" would immediately settle themselves, under the establishment of collecting and redistributing what I have shown to be the people's natural rent of their common estate. The annual *ad-valorem* tax on assets, according to the death-rate of a people, would necessarily level all preferences and skulkings in regard to public burdens; and the same tax, applied to unoccupied land, would force it into the market,

with little waiting for speculative rise in its value, or else the holder would soon be on the road to deserved bankruptcy.

The "transportation question" could not be wholly settled in the same direct way, under the application of the higher law of property. But what civilized people will long submit to unregulated private control over their great avenues of communication and transit? Under the law of eminent domain, these thoroughfares have been opened, as against the rights of special individuals whose possessions stood in their way. Under the same law of eminent domain—the other end of it,—the people can easily find the means of protecting themselves against the extortions of their public carriers. How ridiculous to have a postal department of government, and then have a private citizen decide the freight on a mail-bag, and say whether or not it shall be forwarded! The people are yet infants and savages—not very much in advance of their forefathers, who suffered the mail-clad "chivalry" of Europe to swoop down from their stone castles, and levy "black-mail" on every merchant-traveller. Our railroad corporations do the same thing, under customs and laws more cunning and

hypocritical, but not much more honest, than the ancient precedents.

A people's postal and telegraphic communication, their great lines of waterway and railway—such departments of their business as are common and national in their scope,—must all either vest directly in themselves, or else be subject to the strictest legislative and judicial oversight, before we shall ever get an hour's respite from being scalped and skinned.

But here we come back to the question of tariff.

Under the higher law of property, there would of course be no consideration of such a thing as a tariff for revenue. The only rightful source of government expenses is a direct tax on assets,—a tax which belongs to the people as a part of their natural rent. The only use for any incidental revenue would be to add it to the sum of the birthright tax. On the other hand, if it should be necessary to encourage "home manufactures" for the sake of general growth, independence, and self-defence, the premiums to support such encouragement would have to come out of the same common fund.

It must be mentioned, also, that something

which would amount to a people's toll on exports is a corollary of the higher law of property. For if the people of a country have a common annual interest of two per cent. in its wealth, they must devise some method of collecting their annual rent from such property as they permit to leave their boundaries. But any collection on exports can be made but once; so the people's annuity in them would have to be computed as a perpetuity. It is a principle, however, rather than a specific method, to which attention is here called. The end of a tariff, so far as it is a common good, is to aid in making the wealth of a country as abundant as possible for its own people, and to give them the first benefit of it. The natural wealth of new countries in special should be protected from reckless exportation, which often exhausts what ought to be retained, but which is pushed out in exchange with old nations for trifles and luxuries

To buy cheap and sell dear (to get the most wealth for what is given), and to do a small and profitable business rather than a large and losing one, are supposed to be advantageous rules of business. But tariffs seem to have been framed, especially in America, to violate

both rules as egregiously as possible. They have been framed for individuals, for monopolies, not for the people.

We find, then, that the higher law of property, even if carried into direct practical operation, could be rendered partly if not wholly abortive, by a dishonest or defective currency, a tariff based on chicanery, or a general monopoly in handling and transferring a country's productions. In the United States, each one of these things is an insatiate leech, by which the profits of skill and industry are constantly sucked out of the people's life.

But it will probably be, even yet, a slow process by which such vast wrongs can be righted. In fact, they are only just coming to be understood. And the cure for them presupposes both the elevation and extension of democratic government—the people's full and thorough command of their own welfare.

The very methods of democracy are yet in their infancy, and our American system is an illustration of it. The best we can now do is to live under the rule not of the people but of political parties; whereas a genuine republic will look back on political parties as the rubbish of savagery.

I shall not attempt here to construct even a rough model of the machinery through which such a republic would work. But a homogeneous nation, if at the same time a democracy, would be represented by a national body of its servants large enough to stand for all the people's great interests, both progressive and conservative, and these representatives would be chosen, not by sectional constituencies, but each one by a combination of voters extending throughout the country. In this way, both comparative majorities and comparative minorities would reach expression and sovereignty in a national body while a majority of that body would really duplicate the will of a majority of the people, and govern the nation in its law-making capacity. The members of such a body would soon be the two or three hundred most popular and capable men in the country, and the one standing at the head, by virtue of the most votes behind him, would naturally be the President and chief executive, with such powers as the position would require.

But there is no reason why the people should hire their servants by the year, or by the biennial or quadrennial term. When we learn how to conduct our public business on busi-

ness principles, we shall insist on retaining our most faithful employés for life, and on discharging the unfaithful and incompetent at will. This requirement will ultimate in a system of what may be termed "perpetual elections"—say the right of every citizen to vote monthly, through regularly constituted election bureaus, national, state, and local. A really civilized people will then dispense with the clumsy, expensive, and abused ballot, with its dirty polling-booths; and voting will be done by mail, if most convenient for the voter, each vote being recorded, and the receipt of it acknowledged in writing to the citizen who deposits or sends it. The mere official publication of district, state, and national election reports, will then inform every reader whether his own vote be properly accounted for in his district, and accurately summarized in the state and national reports. The will of the people will thus be fully expressed, the majority will rule while the minority will have all the power belonging to them, and there will be no chance or possibility of fraud.

And now we may sum up this volume in a sentence.

A people who adopt and enforce the higher

law of property, establish a scientific currency and a rational tariff, guard the transit as well as the production of their wealth, and constantly hold these paramount interests in hand by some effective system of "perpetual elections," will have solved every great problem of political economy, which means the material welfare of mankind—practical democracy.

It seems a pity that so much is required, and that the time is not to-day. But let us be thankful that the end is not impossible, and need not even be very distant.

LAST WORD.

THE METHODS OF ANARCHY.

"MAN'S BIRTHRIGHT" goes to press just as America is startled and shocked by information from England that the House of Parliament and the London Tower have been shattered by dynamite, while crowded by holiday visitors, and that several persons, including women and children, have been killed or maimed by the explosion. This outburst of indiscriminate homicide is supposed to come from the spirit of retaliation against England, for the poverty and the political wrongs put upon Ireland.

At the close of a book devoted to the most radical interests of mankind, both in government and property, I feel it incumbent upon me to utter a word of warning against the methods of anarchy.

I say nothing of Russia, where "there is no press, no debate, no explanation of what government does, no remonstrance allowed, no

agitation of public issues,"—nothing but the dead silence of unmitigated tyranny, long known as "a despotism tempered by assassination." But in countries like England and America, where peaceful agitation is a part of daily life, and where the masses are really getting about all they know enough to demand, it is a frightful experiment and an inexcusable blunder to seek reform through murder. Such a course must necessarily lead, on the one hand, to despotism; on the other, to chaos. Grievous as are the ills of present society, they are not yet so utterly bad but that the majority of the people would rather live than die. Hence governments—even free governments—must, in self-defence, adopt whatever measures may be necessary to restrict the persistent votaries of dynamite. Yet, under modern conditions of independence and comparative intelligence, a little overdoing of general repression may end in the very anarchy resisted—a new phase of what followed the downfall of the Roman Empire.

But again, the so-called "better" or "upper classes" of our civilization may not be really so heartless and mercenary as the struggling and harrowed millions imagine. Who can say

that the ruling forces of Britain and the United States would not be willing to do substantial justice to the people, even in the rights of property—on which now depend all other rights,—if the way to do it were perfectly clear and certain? No system of "socialism" or "communism"—no attempt to level the human race, and run mankind in a given mould—has ever had sense enough in it to stand up in front of practical criticism. British legislation, at this moment, does not question, *in theory*, the right of the British people to the common possession of their territory, but holds that individual possession of property is necessary, *as it certainly is*, to the best maintenance and the fullest productiveness of the people's estate. The specious theory that land is any exception to property in general has nothing to rest on, as I trust I have finally made clear.

The Fenian percussionists are, perhaps, past the reach of suggestion; but it will be well to halt in the exploding of dynamite until somebody is altogether sure, at least, that he is right as to the end to be achieved through such ghastly feats.

The higher law of property is before the world. Under this law the people can learn to